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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 2.

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HOPE THE HERMIT

A NOVEL

BY

EDNA LYALL,

AUTHOR OF

"WE TWO," "DONOVAN," "WAYFARING MEN," ETC.

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I N T W O V O L U M E S .

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1898.



HOPE THE HERMIT.

CHAPTER I.

“And charmed by Hope’s sweet music on they fare.”

BOWLES.

AUDREY’S footsteps had scarcely died away in the distance, however, when old Sir Nicholas started to his feet.

“I must talk once more with her as to this notion,” he muttered to himself, slowly making his way from the room.

John Radcliffe looked after him uneasily.

“My brother likes it ill enough,” he said. “Yet the maid is in the right; it is by far the best plan.”

“It is undoubtedly the best plan for you,” said Father Noel with a certain dry emphasis on the pronoun which did not escape John Radcliffe.

“Also for you, my friend, and for my brother—all good Catholics are likely to fare ill if they are found sheltering a conspirator.”

"Sir Nicholas does not trouble his head with that thought," said Father Noel. "It is, as you rightly divine, the best plan for you, but not the best plan or the safest for Mistress Audrey."

"Well, what would you have, Father?" said John Radcliffe, smiling. "Does not holy writ declare that the woman was to be a helpmeet for the man? When a woman offers her help freely, shall I refuse it?"

"There is no fear that you will ever do that, sir," said Father Noel dryly.

"You were ever hard on my little peccadilloes, Father. Yet you must admit that I proved a good husband to an invalid wife."

"I say nothing against your second marriage, but you were greatly to blame as to the first, and depend upon it, sir, you will yet be called to account for your crime."

"Come, Father, crime is a hard word," said John Radcliffe, refilling his tankard. "Let us call it a mistake, an error of judgment. And remember that I christened the imp before leaving him. That ought to be reckoned to me."

"Sir," said the honest old priest, his face aflame, "it was a piece of the most damned impudence I ever heard of! Don't boast of it to me. The sacrament was valid, you say? Of course it was! But how you, with the most cold-blooded murder in your mind, dared to

take such words on your lips passes my comprehension. I tell you frankly that I believe your child by the second marriage was drowned as a punishment for your blasphemy."

"I am quite aware that you account me a scoundrel, Father," said John Radcliffe with a good-humoured smile. "But I think you might remember that I am not, after all, a murderer, and that the child has grown and prospered; that, in fact, he is at present far better off than I am. To-night, for instance, he will be lapped in luxury, while I, for trying to aid my lawful sovereign, am bound to wander like an outcast on the mountains."

"I shall have nothing but hard words for you until you repent and make amends," said the priest. "I gave you every possible help by sending Michael to you in London. But you let all those months pass and never acknowledged him; nay, you deliberately baffled his efforts to discover the truth."

"He was useless for the cause," said John Radcliffe. "When he is likely to be useful I will acknowledge him, but not before."

Father Noel's brow grew dark with anger.

"I used to think the Under-Sheriff the most selfish man living, but i' faith I think you surpass him, sir," he exclaimed wrathfully.

"My dear old friend," said John Radcliffe with a

laugh, "I do but go the way of all flesh. Here in these rural solitudes you, no doubt, have hearts, bowels of compassion, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of virtue, but such things shrivelled up in me many years ago. I care only for what will serve my turn. However, I think as a priest you should allow that my merit in trying to convert Michael Derwent to the true Church ought to count."

"Your efforts to convert him failed," said the priest gravely. "And I think they deserve to fail. I have been your friend, John Radcliffe, for many years, and you'll never get flattery or false comfort from me. That was a true word of the psalmist when he wrote, 'Evil shall hunt the wicked person to overthrow him'".

"It may be a true word, but it's a damned uncomfortable one to quote to a fellow when there's a warrant out against him and he has to pass the night in the open," said John Radcliffe with his air of imperturbable good-humour. "Come, a truce to this talk, and tell me a little more of my pretty niece. Is she really in love with this Under-Sheriff?"

"Unluckily she is!" said Father Noel, sighing. "I doubt its proving a happy marriage, but she honestly cares for the fellow. And I think he cares for her as much as his nature admits of. A cold-blooded fish of a fellow he is; absorbed in himself and his own aggrandisement."

“Yet a degree less heartless than I am,” said John Radcliffe with a twinkle in his bright eyes. “Ah! in good time. Here comes old Duncan with half the contents of the larder. This is much better fare than what Father Noel has been forcing me to swallow—you understand me thoroughly, Duncan. A brace of ducks, excellent! a flagon of Hollands—my good old friend, why not keep to couples still as they did in the ark?—make it two flagons, Duncan; they’ll be easier to carry. Bread enough to stock a stall in Keswick market-place: good! My exile will be endurable.”

The old butler went off chuckling to himself in search of the second bottle of Hollands, and in another minute Sir Nicholas returned to the room so that no more could be said with regard to Michael Derwent.

Meanwhile Audrey had taken out of the old oak chest in her mother’s room the clothes which must serve for the ghost. The doublet and vest she at once saw to be hopeless, for they were long, and cut after the fashion worn in the first year of the Restoration. Moreover, in this summer weather they would prove most cumbersome and hot for a long walk. She chose instead the white frilled shirt; the short grey cloak, with its ample folds, lined with sky-blue taffeta; the knee breeches and stockings, also of grey, and the broad grey felt hat, with pale-blue feathers curling over the brim. All that remained to be done was to loosen the

fillet which bound her hair, and to let her sunny curls hang quite loosely about her shoulders; and when this was done she could not resist laughing at her own reflection in the glass, so exactly did she resemble the young cavalier whose picture hung in the hall below.

All fear had now left her, and her eyes were bright with the fun of this masquerade as she went downstairs to the study. Even old Sir Nicholas forgot his fears and scruples as he looked into the innocent face of the girl, who, without a thought of herself, so readily aided the unknown kinsman, though little approving of his views.

John Radcliffe, about to make some jesting compliment as to the excellent fashion in which the cavalier costume became her, hesitated and finally left the words unuttered. For there was an unconsciousness about Audrey which somehow impressed him, and he resisted the temptation to see what she would look like when she blushed.

The clock had struck one when at length all things were ready, and old Duncan appeared at the door with the provisions stowed away in a small sack, which John Radcliffe swung across his shoulder.

"Now, for all the world I am like Tinker Bunyan's Pilgrim faring forth on his travels," he exclaimed with a laugh. "Come, lead the way, Audrey, for like Christian I flee for my life and have turned my back

on London, the City of Destruction. All the same, Father Noel, be sure to let me know the latest news from the city, for I hanker to return to it."

"I wish I could come with you to-night," said the priest, "but for this luckless knee of mine I could have been your pilot. Take care of your guide, sir, and don't forget that she is risking much for you."

"Oh, depend upon it, she enjoys nothing better than such an adventure. It breaks the monotony of her life," said John Radcliffe, shaking Father Noel by the hand with careless good-nature. Then taking leave of his brother in the cordial, affectionate fashion which always attracted people to him, he followed Audrey out into the hall, down the steps, and across the wet grass which led to the landing-stage. In perfect silence they unmoored the boat, and Audrey signing to him to take the oars, took her place in the stern and made for the boathouse near Stable Hills Farm.

It was now quite dark save for the stars, and Audrey was glad when they had made their way safely across the field near the boathouse and had lit upon the mule track which led through the woods from Keswick to Grange and Rosthwaite. When once this was gained all was easy enough, and they walked on briskly beneath the trees, talking in low voices as they went.

"There is a light on St. Herbert's Isle still," said John Radcliffe, pausing for a minute on the little plank

bridge which had been thrown across the beck flowing down between Walla and Falcon crags. "Is Sir Wilfrid Lawson there?"

"No," replied Audrey, "but some of the children and Mr. Derwent, the secretary. It is most likely his light that we see, for he is a great reader and often studies late at night."

"A pleasant fellow, I met him in London," said John Radcliffe, "though he knew me only under my assumed name of Calverley."

"He is one of my best friends. We were always together as children," said Audrey as they walked on, "but of late somehow I have seen but little of him. For one thing, Mr. Brownrigg never greatly likes him. They had a quarrel as boys. Henry always believes him to be base-born, and though it is practically proved that his mother was the daughter of old Mr. Carleton, near Penrith, and was wedded in London to some stranger, Michael can't get a copy of the certificate, for it has been tampered with."

"Poor fellow!" said John Radcliffe, "that is hard luck on him. Are you sure that is Mr. Brownrigg's reason for holding aloof from him?"

"What other reason could there be?" said Audrey, puzzled by his tone.

"Well, I had a notion, possibly quite a wrong one, that they were rivals," said John Radcliffe; "that in fact,

my pretty niece, Sir Wilfrid's penniless secretary had the audacity to love you, and that Mr. Brownrigg objected to him on that score."

Audrey started, and was glad that the darkness hid her burning face. "I never thought of that," she faltered, a dreadful conviction taking possession of her that her uncle's surmise was true.

"Well, I am bound to own that Father Noel hinted at something of the sort in the letter he wrote to me about young Derwent. And I had not talked long with the lad when we first met at Whitehall without feeling convinced that the worthy father was right."

"I never thought of him but as my friend and foster-brother," said Audrey with a sound of tears in her voice.

"Well, well, there's no blame to you, my dear," said John Radcliffe; "a maiden in your position is bound to have many servants all craving for her hand. Is that Barrow Gill that we hear tumbling over the rocks?"

"Yes," said Audrey, recalled to the present. "We must leave the shore now and climb the fells towards Ashness Farm. There is a track here to the left which the Watendlath people ride down on their way to Keswick Market."

Leaving the shelter of the trees, they now began to ascend the rough track. The cool night air was deli-

cious, and John Radcliffe seemed to forget all the perils that beset him in sheer enjoyment of the present.

"It makes me feel like a boy again," he said. "After all, though these damned Dutch folk cause me to be hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, they furnish me with unknown delights as well. And who knows? In a few days the tide may have turned; King James may enjoy his own again, and we shall then taste the sweets of hunting."

"Place-hunting or Protestant-hunting?" asked Audrey with mirth in her voice.

John Radcliffe laughed.

"I did not give thee credit for so apt a retort, my pretty niece. But, depend upon it, I shall never forget the good turn the Borrowdale Bogle is doing me to-night; and when the King comes to his own again, why, I will see to it that Henry Brownrigg is not molested, so you are serving your lover by this little escapade."

"Hush!" cried Audrey, gripping his arm in a sudden panic.

"As I live! a light!" exclaimed John Radcliffe beneath his breath. "It moves too. It must be a lantern."

They stood perfectly still, watching anxiously to see whether the light drew nearer; then, when there could no longer be a question that it was steadily approach-

ing them, Audrey swiftly drew her uncle out of the track, and moving a little to the right, whispered in his ear:—

“Crouch down at the further side of the thorn-bush by the gill. It must be someone from Ashness Farm.”

John Radcliffe promptly obeyed, while Audrey, gliding to the near side of the bush, stood erect, her eyes fixed on the approaching light, knowing that the only chance of avoiding danger was to strike awe into the heart of whatever shepherd or dalesman it proved to be. She must enact the ghost and still her own fears, though her heart throbbed till she felt half-suffocated.

The lantern swung a little as its bearer strode down the hill; he seemed in haste, and Audrey fondly hoped that he might not even observe her, when, just as he was passing within twenty yards, something made him glance in the direction of the thorn-bush. For a moment he paused, then, to her horror, lifted the lantern till its light fell full upon her. Her eyes dilated with terror, but by a supreme effort she stood absolutely still, and the next instant the terrible tension was relieved, for the shepherd with a loud cry rushed past, and she saw the lantern swaying madly to and fro as he plunged recklessly down the hill, while upon the still night air there floated back gasping ejaculations of:—

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
Bless the ground that I tread on.

When at length all was still once more and the light had disappeared John Radcliffe crept out of his shelter at the farther side of the thorn, and taking her hand, pressed it fast in his.

"God bless you, little ghost," he said. "Why, how cold you are, child! It has given you a fright. Come! we must wait no longer, but hasten to shelter lest the good man returns upon his way. It was worth something to see anyone in such a panic," and he chuckled softly to himself as he thought of the shepherd's horrified cry and of the way in which he had scuttled down the hillside. "Who was the fellow, do you think? And what can have been his errand at this time of night?"

"It was Tim Grisedale, the shepherd from Ashness Farm," said Audrey, mounting the hill cheerfully again. "But what takes him out I do not know. See! there is a light in the farm. Perhaps his wife has been taken ill; she is the daughter of the miller of Lowdore, and Tim may have been going to fetch her mother to her."

"In that case," said John Radcliffe, laughing, "he had better say naught as to his encounter with the ghost or the good woman will not care to come out."

"Oh," said Audrey merrily, "the shepherd has much

more imagination than his mother-in-law; she would only mock at his ghost story and say there were no such things as spirits walking the earth. I used to say so till I saw the ghost of Michael's mother."

John Radcliffe rapidly crossed himself.

"Saw what?" he asked sharply.

"The ghost of Michael's mother at Carleton Manor. I saw her by the gate, and the horses saw her too, and shied and ran away. That was the cause of the coach overturning, and my mother never really recovered from the accident, though she lived many months after it."

"My dear child," he said in an expostulating voice, "is it likely that the dead would come from another world to make a couple of carriage-horses overturn a coach?"

"And yet you know, uncle, holy writ proves that animals are often quicker to see spirits than men are. Besides, I can never for a moment doubt that I saw her myself. It was the very image of the picture at the manor, and of the miniature which Michael and I dug up in Borrowdale. Just that beautiful, innocent, girlish face, but of course you never saw the miniature, did you?"

"N-no," said John Radcliffe, shivering a little. "Mr. Derwent would scarcely have shown it to a mere acquaintance. Isn't there some legend about a 'barfoot

stag' and a ghostly pack of hounds in this part of the world?"

"They will not trouble us here," said Audrey, "but the people at Rosthwaite and Watendlath often hear them. They say the stag plunges into the Derwent, where it flows past the Bowder Stone. I have never heard it, but Agnes Collins of Grange and Anne Fisher used to tell us about it when we were children. Michael never would believe that it was anything but the wind roaring among the crags."

By this time they had reached the ford where the Watendlath folk crossed Barrow Gill on their way to Keswick Market; and though crossing the stepping stones in the dark was no easy task, Audrey managed it better than she had expected and found that the ghost's attire lent itself admirably to the rough scrambling over rock and fell and through bush and briar which followed.

At length they gained the place among the woods in which as children she and Michael had so often played. It was a shallow cave hidden away among the brushwood and worn ages ago in the grey rock. To make a bed of heather and ling, to stow away the provisions, and to listen to her uncle's cheery flow of talk, kept Audrey fully occupied for the next half hour; then, satisfied as to his safety and promising to return on the evening of the fifth day with news and fresh provisions,

she took leave of the kinsman who a few hours before had been utterly unknown to her, but to whose charm of manner she had so quickly responded.

To make her way home quite alone in the dark was eerie enough; she breathed more freely when she was out of the wood and had the cheerful ripple of Barrow Gill for company. When she had safely forded the little stream she stood still for a moment, looking down through the gloom to the faint glimmer which just showed where Derwentwater lay in the valley below. She could see, too, the light on Lord's Island, and the light still burned in Michael's room on St. Herbert's Isle.

With a pang her uncle's words returned to her. Could it indeed be true that he had loved her? She walked sorrowfully down the hill, musing over the past, thinking of the journey to Raby Castle and of the days there before Henry arrived, seeing many things in a wholly different light, shuddering to think how all unconsciously she had encouraged him. She had loved him always, but merely as her foster-brother and old playmate, while with him all had been different. Surely, too, he was greatly changed since her betrothal. He looked much older and graver; he eagerly availed himself of every excuse to avoid her, and though now so near a neighbour, invariably put forward some excellent reason for refusing the invitations of Sir Nicholas or

Father Noel. She had only met him once since his return from London, and then his manner had been strange and constrained; while his reference to her mother's death had been merely formal and had chilled rather than comforted her. Was this the explanation of it all, and could it be, as her uncle said, that all the time Father Noel had known the truth of things?

And then remembering the loneliness of Michael's position, and the hard fate which had followed him from the very beginning of his life, the tears rushed to her eyes and half-blinded her.

The sting of it lay in the perception that it was quite out of her power to do anything for him. If this were indeed true, Henry Brownrigg's jealousy and dislike were explained, and she could not hope even in the most distant future to serve Michael. Brushing the tears from her eyes that she might see her way, she was all at once horrified to find herself confronted by Tim Grisedale and his lantern, while beside him toiled Meg Mounsey, the miller's wife.

"Don't talk to me of the Borrowdale Bogle!" said Meg Mounsey. "'Twas nowt but thy ain foolish fancy."

"I say it *were* the bogle," said Tim doggedly, "and look you! there it goes glidin' awa' over the fell."

He stopped dead, and with trembling hands raised the lantern so that its rays fell upon the tall ghostly figure with its light plumes and antique cavalier dress.

Meg Mounsey, the stubborn disbeliever in ghosts, fell on her knees.

"Gude, preserve us!" she cried, quaking with terror. "'Twas the truth you told, Tim. And sair a doubt but it bodes ill to my poor lass at the farm."

"See where it stalks down yonder," said Tim, staring with dilated eyes at the ghost as it glided away and finally disappeared among the trees at the foot of the hill. "Thank heaven, 'tis gone!" he gasped. "Now hasten, guid mother, lest it coom back!"

And Meg Mounsey, nothing loth, rose from her knees and breathlessly climbed the fell, now and then glancing back in an awestruck way to see that the bogle was not pursuing them.

CHAPTER II.

“For many a laugh went through the vale,
And some conviction too;
Each thought some other goblin tale
Perhaps was just as true.”

ROBERT BLOOMFIELD.

ON the following morning the little town of Keswick was, as usual, crowded with country-folk coming in to dispose of their goods in the Market Square and to buy necessities for the coming week.

Zinogle, the fiddler, loved market-day, for he was a sociable being and took great pleasure in chatting with the dales-folk and telling them the latest news. It was therefore only natural that, as he leant against the doorway of the old wooden building in the centre of the square which was dignified by the name of the Town Hall, he should be one of the first to listen to Tim Grisedale's story of the Borrowdale Bogle.

Now, it chanced that the Under-Sheriff was standing just inside the door, listening to the long-winded tale of the constable in whose charge a certain prisoner in the lock-up had proved refractory. Henry Brownrigg found the tale of the Borrowdale Bogle the more interesting of the two, and dismissing the constable with orders to

punish the refractory prisoner and to have him removed with all speed to Cockermouth Gaol, he stood listening carefully to what passed between the shepherd and the fiddler.

"This looks strange," he muttered to himself. "It was last night I saw the boat go across to Lord's Island and searched the house. Is it possible that this ghost can be the man we are in search of?"

"Look here, my good fellow," he exclaimed, suddenly emerging from the doorway to Tim's consternation, "at what time did you see this Borrowdale Bogle?"

"Aw, zur, it were after midnight; mappen aboot two o'clock or mappen a bit earlier, the first time," said the shepherd.

"You saw it twice, then? Whereabouts?"

"First by Barrow Gill, far up the fell, and again with Meg Mounsey as I coom back, and then it were lower doon the hill, stalkin' awa' over towards Falcon Crag, but bearin' doon to the shore until I lost sight of it in the trees."

"You are sure it was no idle fancy? You shepherd-folk are apt to see visions."

"Zur, mappen that be true, but Meg Mounsey she be solid and slow in the headpiece, and she saw it and droppit on her knees, a-callin' herself a miserable sinner, for, but a wee while afore, she had sworn there was no sech things as bogles."

Zinogle chuckled.

"Meg Mounsey is evidence; no one can gainsay that," he said. "A stuck pig has more imagination. If Meg Mounsey saw a bogle, why, sir, the bogle must have been there."

"Dressed like a cavalier, you say, with light plumes in its hat and a short cloak? 'Tis a strange story! I have a mind to look into this matter. If I remember right, there is some idle tale in the country-side about one of the Radcliffes that was killed in the civil war and has ever since walked. We will set a few folk to look for this disturber of the peace, and if you see it again, Tim, let me know with all speed. Zinogle, if I mistake not, yonder comes your godson, the foundling; have the goodness to ask him to step across here and speak to me."

Zinogle, inwardly raging at the Under-Sheriff's rudeness, slowly approached Michael.

"Our cock-a-hoop Under-Sheriff desires speech with ye," he said, "and, for the love of God, do take him down a peg or two; speak to him in the latest fangled London fashion."

Michael laughed at the old fiddler's comical expression, and in truth there was a new dignity in his manner born of self-restraint, and a certain nameless ease of bearing gained by mixing more with his fellow-men. Henry greeted him in his usual patronising tone,

but instinctively felt that he no longer had the power to gall his old schoolfellow.

"There is a strange story afoot to-day about the Borrowdale Bogle," he said when the salutations were over. "Have you ever heard of it? As a native of Borrowdale, you ought to know the truth of such things."

"Oh," said Michael with a laugh, "I have heard that old wife's tale many a time, but I never put any faith in it."

"What form is it supposed to take?"

"Why, the form of the young kinsman of old Sir Edward Radcliffe, who garrisoned Lord's Island in the civil war. 'Tis true enough, I believe, that he was killed in a duel on the shores of Derwentwater somewhere between Falcon Crag and Lowdore, and of course the dales-folk say that he walks."

"You never by any chance saw him?" said Henry Brownrigg with a searching look.

"Never," said Michael, "nor do I expect ever to see him."

"Yet here is Tim Grisedale ready to take his Bible oath that both he and Meg Mounsey of Lowdore saw the ghost last night, or rather before dawn this morning."

"Meg Mounsey!" cried Michael, bursting into a hearty boyish laugh. "Well, that passes all belief! If Meg Mounsey takes to ghost-seeing I shall have to be-

lieve in them, for a more matter-of-fact body doesn't exist. Surely 'twas something of a solid and corporeal nature that she saw, a white horse maybe, or a stray cow."

"Well, they described the ghost as in cavalier dress with light plumes in his hat," said the Under-Sheriff. "'Tis a very odd tale. If Audrey had seen it I should not have been surprised, for she is out of health and broods too much over her mother's death; moreover, she has imagination, and, as you will remember, fancied she saw a vision at Carleton Manor last year."

"Yes," said Michael gravely, "I could never understand that story; it was one of the things which no one can explain. Perhaps, after all, in certain states of mind and body the spirit world can make itself visible to us. I have no belief in this silly tale of the Borrowdale Bogle, yet I confess to a sneaking belief in such a purposeful return as that of the ghost in *Hamlet*. This is bad news as to the defeat off Beachy Head. I had heard nothing of it till this morning; how distracted the poor Queen will be! Is there no news from Ireland?"

"None as yet," said Henry Brownrigg gloomily. "Things look black indeed for the future. Did you hear anything before you left London of the Jacobite plottings?"

"Oh! there was of course much talk about them," said Michael with a momentary hesitation which did not escape the keen and observant Under-Sheriff.

"But naturally you did not hear anything but rumours. You did not happen to become acquainted with any of these plotters?"

Now, Michael had a very shrewd suspicion that Mr. Calverley was embroiled in the Jacobite plot, but he was not minded to say so to Henry Brownrigg.

"I had little time for making acquaintance of any sort," he replied evasively. "A private secretary has to be at the beck and call of his master, And though Sir Wilfrid Lawson is, as you know, the most considerate of men, this legal business of his gave one plenty to do."

With that he raised his hat and bade the Under-Sheriff good-day, leaving him in some perplexity.

"I would give much to know whether that fellow is in league with the priest on Lord's Island," he reflected. "There was no getting anything out of him to-day; yet I am much inclined to fancy that he knows something of Mr. John Radcliffe, *alias* Mr. James Calverley. I shall go in for a little ghost-stalking for the next week or two, and see if I can't get hold of our fugitive. Mounsey, the miller, will make a good patrol, and I'll bring over Matt Birkett from Millbeck; he is a wary fellow and has the eyes of a hawk. If we can only get hold of John Radcliffe, it will suit my game admirably, and should it chance that Michael Derwent is mixed up in the affair, why, all the better, for I hate the fellow and owe him a grudge."

Audrey paid the penalty of her escapade by being prostrated the next day by a violent attack of nervous headache, called in those days an attack of the megrim, and was still too poorly on the Sunday to go as usual to the Church of St. Kentigern at Crosthwaite. Perhaps she was not sorry to remain at home, for it deferred her meeting with Henry, and somehow she dreaded this, fearing that he might ask some unanswerable question, or that she might by some hesitation of manner betray the secret that had been entrusted to her.

Fortunately for her, the Under-Sheriff happened to be unusually busy, and it was not until the afternoon of Tuesday that he was able to visit Lord's Island again. Audrey was sitting in the orchard in one of her favourite nooks under the apple-trees that grew near the water's edge on the south end of the island. She came swiftly forward to greet her lover, forgetting for a moment all that had happened in the pleasure of his approach. What were Jacobite plots, or religious differences, or fugitive great-uncles when love was in question?

For a time her tender womanliness called out all that was best in Henry Brownrigg; he forgot his schemes, and his sordid, hard-hearted plans for the future; just for a little while he became what she dreamt him to be—single-hearted, generous, and devoted.

"I was sorry," he said, "to have to search the house the other night. I hope, dear heart, you did not take it amiss."

"Why, no," said Audrey. "You had to do your duty, and I know you bear no ill will to my grandfather."

"Indeed I do not," he said. "Everyone respects Sir Nicholas. But his brother is a very different man, a dangerous plotter, a hard-hearted bigot, one that would relentlessly persecute all who were not of his faith, should his party ever return to power."

"But surely it never can return," said Audrey eagerly.

"Indeed, there is grievous fear that it may," said the Under-Sheriff, and he spoke truly enough, for never had England been in such jeopardy as during those summer days. "Here is the English fleet disgracefully beaten, and the French fleet, in unopposed possession of the Channel, likely to swoop down at any time and harry our coast. Then there is this accursed Jacobite plot, sowing grievous dissensions in the country, and, worst of all, an express has just arrived with news that King William has been wounded in Ireland on the banks of the Boyne."

Audrey's eyes filled with tears; it was not only that the desperate condition of the country troubled her, but that the miserable position she found herself in seemed all at once to grow intolerable. Was she, whose sympathies were all with King William and Queen Mary, and the cause they had come to defend, to be called

upon to tramp over the fells, bearing to the fugitive the news he would gloat over of the King's wound?

"Don't fret over the disaster," said Henry Brownrigg, putting his arm round her. "A wound in the shoulder from a ball is a dangerous thing, and the King's constitution is sickly, yet we may at least hope that his life will be spared. And should the worst happen that King James and his tyranny be brought back to this land, why, I think Sir Nicholas Radcliffe will do his utmost to prevent any evil coming on his granddaughter's husband."

He stooped and kissed her hand, and Audrey's spirits revived a little as she remembered that Uncle Radcliffe had himself spoken somewhat similar words as they climbed the fells in the dark and had reminded her that she was, after all, serving her lover.

Still there remained with her the heavy sense that a concealment was being practised, an unavoidable concealment, but one that was nevertheless hateful to her; while Henry Brownrigg also felt somewhat hampered by his determination to say nothing to her as to the story of the Borrowdale Bogle, and his suspicions and precautions with regard to it.

A silence fell between them. Audrey's eyes wandered to the wooded heights between Barrow Gill and Lowdore, and she wondered how Uncle Radcliffe was faring in the cave where she had hidden him, and

thought with a shudder of the lonely walk she must take on Wednesday night. Henry meantime fell into a reverie, weighing the chances for and against his capturing John Radcliffe, and wondering whether he could ply Audrey with a few questions without putting her too much upon her guard. He started a little when at last she spoke.

"Did you say, Henry, that King William had been wounded during a battle?"

"No, they say he had just breakfasted beside the Boyne; on the opposite side of the river the Popish army was drawn up, and just as the King mounted his horse a ball struck him. No doubt by this time the battle they were then expecting has been fought. What would one not give to know which side had won! But news travels slowly; all this happened some days ago, yet the news only reached us here this afternoon."

She sighed. "Let us talk no more of public matters," she said wearily. "Instead let us plan the arrangements for our wedding. You will not mind, Henry, if it is quite a quiet wedding; it is too soon after our sorrow to have any merrymaking."

"I mind nothing so long as you will not again postpone the day. Remember that we arranged it should be in August. You are sure your grandfather was not hurt by my visit the other night? You see it was a

matter of official duty. I had no choice but to search for this refugee."

"Oh, my grandfather understood that, and indeed he said you seemed to dislike your task," said Audrey.

"What is Mr. John Radcliffe like?" said Henry Brownrigg, watching her narrowly as he put the question.

She sprang quickly to her feet and took his hand in hers. "Come into the house," she said. "His picture hangs in the hall and you can judge for yourself."

"Well!" thought Henry, "evidently the uncle is not here, or she would not suggest my coming in."

"I'll not come in," he said. "It would scarcely be courteous to Sir Nicholas after the other night. Tell me what your Uncle Radcliffe is like."

"Well, the picture was painted some years ago, but in these days of periwigs men change but little; no doubt it is still very much like him," said Audrey reflectively. "He is standing very erect and looks active and vigorous; his eyes look bright and eager, and his perwig is of a rather light-brown colour, much like my hair. He is twenty years younger than my grandfather, and has always, they tell me, enjoyed the best of health, so that people often fancy him to be younger than he really is."

"Is he a tall man?"

"I remember once hearing my grandfather say that he was a somewhat small-made man, much about the

same height and build as Michael Derwent," said Audrey, surprised by the calmness of her own manner.

"Derwent can't be more than five feet seven or eight," said Henry Brownrigg, drawing himself up in the proud consciousness of his six feet three inches, and unable to resist a sneer at his old schoolfellow. "I well remember what a puny little fellow he was as a boy. Well, my love, I must not linger here. I shall see you again doubtless in a few days' time."

For a moment Audrey felt relieved that he should go; then reproaching herself with the feeling, she took leave of him with a tenderness and a warmth of demonstration which she seldom manifested.

"Oh! if only Uncle Radcliffe were safely out of the country!" she thought to herself as she felt Henry's strong arm about her. "How restful and safe all would be! How Henry would shield me and care for me!"

"Clearly Audrey has not seen this Jacobite kinsman," reflected the Under-Sheriff, "yet, for all that, he may very likely be sheltering in the neighbourhood. That priest with his humbugging knee—all a sham, no doubt—would be quite capable of hiding him, for he knows the fells better than anyone about here. I shall keep on the alert and have my sentinels in readiness."

CHAPTER III.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MICHAEL DERWENT.

“How could it be so fair, and you away?
How could the trees be beauteous, flowers so gay?
Could they remember but last year,
How you did them, they you delight,
The sprouting leaves which saw you here,
And called their fellows to the sight,
Would, looking round for the same sight in vain,
Creep back into their silent barks again.”

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

THE chronicle begun long ago in the quiet of the long vacation at Cambridge hath remained untouched for many months. For by the time I had written of my arrival in London, of my first impressions of Sir William Denham's household, and of the eventful evening at Whitehall when I first encountered Mr. James Calverley, there seemed little time for writing. London, I perceive, is a place where all is haste and bustle, where men talk, and argue, and jostle up against each other, but where it is no easy task to think, or to read or to write in peace and quiet.

Nevertheless, that which is not done at once remains undone, for now, sitting in solitude in my room on St. Herbert's Isle, that brief stay in London seems to me

like a dream, and for the most part a dream I care not to dwell upon. Specially I would fain free my mind from the remembrance of the hours spent with James Calverley and his friends, for though at the time they had a strange fascination about them, I know well that had it not been for other influences, these subtle men, with their arguings and their specious reasoning, would have had me ere long in their power and used me as their tool. London, however, though it brought me face to face with evil of every sort, brought me also the best of gifts. For, apart from the gift of a good mother, and a true and loving wife—luxuries which fate had denied to me—there is no gift to be compared to the friendship of an unselfish and pure-minded woman.

During these hard days after my return, when the knowledge that Audrey was close at hand, though for ever cut off from me, made me at times well-nigh desperate, it was the thought of Mistress Mary Denham, and of the quiet courage with which she lived her life, that proved my best support. Many a time, too, I lived over again our visit to the Friends' meeting-house and the memorable day when we heard George Fox; while to her also I owed introductions to many of the most noteworthy people, to the sweet-natured Lady Temple, to the delightful family of the Evelyns, and to the Dean of St. Paul's. I am sure Dean Tillotson's broad-hearted charity and practical religion keep many men, nowa-

days, from drifting into utter unbelief when sickened by the bickerings and wranglings of those who make more of their pet dogmas than of Christianity itself—which, as the Dean teaches, is Love. Dogmatic teachers always make me think of physicians who, while the patient is dying of starvation and want of care, insist that he shall first rehearse the names science has given to every bone in the body. Worse still, the physicians do not agree with each other and quarrel while the poor wretch is at his last gasp; one set declaring that he will regain health by certain movements of the arms, the other faction contending that the legs are the important members.

Unless some sensible good Samaritan chances to pass that way, the victim is apt to expire, muttering the words of the dying *Mercutio*:—

A plague on both your houses!

I had written thus far when one of the children ran into the room bearing a letter which had been brought over by a messenger from Keswick. I saw at once that it was from Mistress Mary Denham, and breaking the seal—a very dainty one in green wax, bearing the device “*Sursum corda*”—I read the following lines:—

SIR,

We were glad to learn that you had made a safe journey to the north, and regret much that Sir Wilfrid should have found so dire a foe as the small-pox to greet him at Isel. Your description

of the solitude of the island on Derwentwater reads strangely here in London, and I think from what you say that it is something of a trial to you to be once more in a place where all outwardly is the same as in old days, while in other respects so much has altered. But, after all, this letter is not just to say that I am sorry for your loneliness, but to tell you of a matter which I think may interest you. This day Lady Temple came to see me, and we spoke much of the arrest of the Jacobite plotters and of all suspected persons. The most noteworthy is her Majesty's uncle, my Lord Clarendon, who is now lodged in the Tower, and that Catholic gentleman you used to meet at Mr. Winter's chambers—Mr. Anthony Sharp—is also arrested: it seems that he is a priest in disguise. Lady Temple told me that a warrant was also made out for the arrest of Mr. James Calverley, but that he had contrived to leave London. Now comes the strange part: it seems that Calverley was but an assumed name, and that he is in truth a Mr. John Radcliffe, a younger brother and heir to Sir Nicholas Radcliffe, your friend on Lord's Island. This will perhaps explain Father Noel's friendship with him, and the civility he showed to you. The poor Queen is well-nigh distracted with anxiety and grief, for indeed the country seems to be in great danger, and she scarcely knows who may be reckoned on as trustworthy friends and advisers. I think there never can have been a more devoted wife than she; 'tis a grievous pity that his Majesty is merely a brave soldier, and scarce merits such a noble woman as his Queen. I fear, from what Lady Temple says, he is one of those who will learn, too late, rightly to value what they have lost, and will be of the many husbands who erect fine tombstones with touching epitaphs to their wives, yet when they were living could not even be faithful to them.

My uncle sends you his kind remembrances, and says that if you have leisure you would do him a great service by making that collection of all the moths to be found in the woods surrounding Derwentwater which we talked of before you left London. He and his friend Dr. Martin Lister have already received fine specimens from diverse counties. Dr. Lister says the best way to set about it is to go out when it is dark, having previously, by day, put treacle

on the trunks of certain trees. This attracts the moths, and you will find no difficulty in capturing them. Yet have a care, or someone may mistake you for a highwayman, or for the ghost you told me of which haunts Borrowdale! There is as yet no book writ upon moths, though the late Mr. Willoughby had often desired to attempt the study of them, but died before he could carry it out. I hope to secure some at Katterham, and should you have an opportunity of sending any specimens to London they had best be directed to Sir William, for I shall be with my uncle, Sir Joscelyn Heyworth, at the Court House for the next two months. Mr. Wharncliffe has just been to call upon us. He says that to-day he met Mr. Winter on the stairs at his chambers in King's Bench Walk, and that, happening to mention something as to Mr. Calverley's escape, Mr. Winter said he had heard a rumour that he had fled to France, but knew not if 'twas true. I give it you for what 'tis worth, knowing that you had some liking for him and, though not approving his views, would scarce wish him to be thrown into prison merely on suspicion. I can never think of the inside of our prisons without a shudder, for truly they are hells on earth. It hurts one to see the poor souls being dragged to Tyburn, perhaps just for some petty theft, and yet I am not sure that it is not a better fate than to linger on in gaol, for God is merciful and men are not. We were trying the other night, as we read Willoughby's book on birds, to remember some of your Borrowdale names for them, but I could not get further than "Jack-eslop" for a kite, and "Joan-na-ma-cronk" for a heron! I think you must have more time in your part of the world, or you would never use such long names! Do not forget to tell us any observations you make, as to any kind of animal life, for it is the one thing now which interests Sir William. As he grows older he takes less and less interest in politics, having, I think, lived through too many changes to be surprised at anything. But they say he never was at heart aught but a naturalist; and Uncle Heyworth has a story of how, when he was made prisoner in the civil war, and Uncle Denham and my father were appointed as the officers who were responsible for him, Uncle Denham crowded up the little room they shared in Farnham Castle,

with spiders and newts and frogs, on which he was experimenting; these creatures—not being on *parole*—were always escaping, while poor Uncle Heyworth had to stay, eating his heart out as a prisoner of war!

However, I ramble on about the past when at any moment we may have the French fleet in the Thames, and London attacked. It were better to despatch this letter to you at once, specially as my cousin Rupert promises to take it himself as far as York and to send it on safely from there.

With kind remembrances from us all,

I rest, your friend,

MARY DENHAM.

Written at Norfolk Street,
This 27th day of June, 1690.

There was not a word in the letter of Audrey Radcliffe, and yet I knew that Mistress Denham understood why it was that this enforced stay on St. Herbert's Isle was so specially hard to me. She knew my story and readily divined much that I had never told her in words. More than once we had spoken of the difficulties of the position and of the best course to steer. Nor was I without a shrewd suspicion that all this study of moths was with a view to giving me something fresh to think of, and to keep me from dwelling on those past memories which made every part of Derwentwater and Borrowdale a place of pain and peril to me.

Turning over the sheet once more, I read her words about James Calverley, and marvelled to think that I had never guessed his secret. For now that I thought

of it, I well remembered his picture, taken in early life, and had often looked at it in the hall at Lord's Island. No doubt that subtle attraction he had possessed for me lay in his unknown kinship with Audrey. And then a fresh thought rushed into my mind and put me to no small perturbation. Had he and his friends succeeded in bringing me over to the Romish Church, would they have tried to stop the Brownrigg marriage, which was so distasteful to them? Was this perhaps what Father Noel had all the time been aiming at? Was this his reason for deliberately forcing me that time in the previous autumn to be as much as might be in Audrey's presence? It seemed possible, and, much as I hated Henry Brownrigg, the thought of playing so mean a part made me recoil. A thousand times I blessed Mistress Denham for having saved me from falling a victim to the arguments of Anthony Sharp and James Calverley, and with an effort I banished Audrey's face from my mind and plunged desperately into the dreary work of correcting my pupils' Latin exercises.

The next few days were eventful. First came the news of the terrible disaster off Beachy Head, and dread of a French invasion of the southern counties filled the whole land with a panic which is indescribable. Then soon after came the woeful tidings that King William had been wounded in Ireland. By the time the news reached Paris, they told us afterwards that the wound

had become magnified into a fatal wound, and the French had burnt his effigy in triumph, together with the effigy of the devil bearing a scroll, with the saying—"I have been waiting for thee these two years."

It was, I must own, in great dejection that I rowed into Keswick on the afternoon of Wednesday, the 9th July, to learn if any fresh news had been received. It was one of those cloudy days with every now and then bright gleams of sunshine, which we so often get in these parts. To the north the great mass of Skiddaw was flecked with purple shadows, while the Vale of Newlands was filled with mist, out of which the mountains rose like rocks from sea-foam.

Just as I gained the landing-stage and moored the boat the sun shone out gloriously, and, looking back, I saw that grand vista in which you look up the whole length of Derwentwater with its wooded shores and islands, and from end to end of craggy Borrowdale, the rugged heights of Glaramara blocking the southern part, and Castle Crag guarding what we call the jaws of the dale. As I looked, the bells of Crosthwaite Church rang out a joyful peal—surely that must mean that good news had arrived! Hurrying into the little market town, I eagerly inquired, and soon learnt that the bells were being rung because King William's wound had proved to be of the slightest and because, on the following day, he had gained a great victory over King James, who had

deserted his army and was flying with all speed to France, leaving the poor Irish who had rallied in his support to shift for themselves as best they might. I rowed back, feeling as though a huge load had been lifted off my heart, but as I passed Lord's Island my own personal trouble seized upon me once more, for there, down by the shore feeding her swans, stood Audrey, and catching sight of me, she gave the clear, ringing call with which we had always signalled to each other as children. I had no choice but to obey her, but I determined not to quit the boat.

"What are the church bells ringing for?" she asked eagerly. "I had heard of no wedding."

I remembered with a pang that probably the next time they rang a peal it would be for her marriage with the Under-Sheriff, which they told me had been fixed for next month; it almost seemed as if she read my thoughts, for suddenly a burning flush rose in her cheeks and her eyes grew bright as if with unshed tears.

"The bells ring because of King William's victory in the battle of the Boyne," I replied, "and because King James has deserted the Irish as he deserted the English, and is by this time, no doubt, safely in France. The news has been long in reaching us, for the battle, they say, was fought on the first of this month; we are always somewhat behind the time in these parts."

"Then you think the country is out of danger?" she asked with anxious eyes.

"Yes, people say that a battle so decisive must practically end the war in Ireland, and the French King will scarcely stand by such a poltroon as King James. Truly he seems to think only of himself! He is curiously lacking in his father's courage. How is Father Noel's knee?"

"It still disables him," said Audrey. "Will you not come in and see him? He will want to hear the news."

But I was not minded to stay longer than I need in her company, which had no good effect on me, while the prospect of telling news which must be unwelcome to one of Father Noel's way of thinking, did not attract me. I made a hurried excuse, and wishing her good-day, rowed off to St. Herbert's Isle.

I wondered that she did not hasten into the house to carry the news to her grandfather; perhaps she felt that it would be unpleasant to bear him news which could hardly fail to pain any Roman Catholic. At any-rate, she stood there on the shore, now and then throwing a bit of bread to her swans, but always with her eyes following my boat. I watched her till I could distinguish nothing but her black dress against the green of the trees in the background, and a bright gleam where the sunshine fell upon her hair. All the time, through the aching of my heart, there was an odd con-

sciousness of having lived through this before, not only this slow separation—this parting long drawn out—from Audrey, but also the passionate inward appeal against a fate which seemed always to be against me.

Then, suddenly, as I glanced towards Lowdore, it all came back to me. I was once more a little child, sobbing on the grass, and Audrey's boat had become a mere speck in the distance.

"Snoggles!" I had cried, "was it wrong of me to be picked up under a bush?"

And dear old Zinogle had allowed me to bury my face in his rough frieze coat, and had said that I need feel no shame, and that hope was to be my guiding star.

Well, just now there did not seem much left to hope for—only, in fact, to hope that I might live through this evil time bravely, not bitterly, and prove myself not wholly unworthy of the friendship of Mistress Denham.

Thinking of her thus, I resolved to go nothing that evening, and hailing two of the children who stood by the landing-place on St. Herbert's Isle, bade them run and ask Dickon's wife for some treacle. Then we all three rowed across to the woods on the eastern shore of Derwentwater, about opposite the little islet of Ramps-holme, and, having prepared the tree-trunks according to Mistress Denham's directions, returned home to get ready such things as would be wanted that night—a

dark lantern, a wallet, and sundry little boxes for the moths I hoped to capture.

The house on St. Herbert's Isle was but small, and now that some of the Isel servants were sick with the small-pox, we lived very quietly, there being on the island only myself and my two pupils; Dickon and his wife, who lived always in the island house, took charge of it and waited upon us. It must have been about ten o'clock that I bade Dickon good-night, telling him that I hoped to return from my mothing expedition in about an hour's time, and carrying with me the key of the house door, although, indeed, it was scarce likely that any should try to enter during my absence.

The night was cloudy, though, being still early in July, it was not so dark but that one could see the outlines of the mountains and make out easily enough the place where we had landed in the afternoon. Any sort of hunt is not without pleasure to a man, and I confess to having forgotten everything else in the eager pursuit of my treacle-lured victims, which truly enough were on the tree-trunks, as Mistress Denham had said, when the sound of steps and voices close by made me start violently.

"Tut, tut, man," said one of the voices, "'twas nowt but thy fancy."

"Nay, 'twas the bogle," said the other, and I at once recognised the voice of Mounsey, the miller of Lowdore.

"Hullo, Mounsey!" I cried, willing to relieve the man's abject terror. "'Tis not the Borrowdale Bogle. 'Tis I, Michael Derwent. What are you doing here at this time of night?"

"Why, sir, I'm main glad to see you," gasped the miller. "Me and Matt Birkett of Millbeck have been set by the Under-Sheriff to find out the truth of this Borrowdale Bogle that has been seen by many of late. Mr. Brownrigg, he will get to the bottom of it, he says, and if so be it be one of the lads dressed up just to scare the women-folk, he says he'll have him set in the stocks. My gude wife has been ill ever since the night she saw the bogle by Barrow Gill."

"Oh! I heard it had been seen," I said, laughing. "And Tim Grisedale saw it first of all, I understand. Who else has come across it?"

"Well, sir, there be Nanny, the dairymaid at Ashness Farm. She has been scared nearly out of her senses, for, waking at dawn and going down to see some sickly chicken she was nursing up, she saw the bogle making as though it would drown itself in the beck, but couldna drown, being only a spirit. Then it wrung its hands very sorrowfully, and before she could stir for fright, it had disappeared in Ashness woods, whereat Nanny fell a-screeching like an owl, and frightened the whole household."

"Mr. Brownrigg," said Matt Birkett, a dour-looking

man, who spoke now for the first time, "puts little faith in ghosts and bogles, and thinks more likely 'tis some worthless loon, a thieving Scot, or a highwayman. But, after all, sir, it may have been just yoursel', if I might mak' bold to ask what you are doing."

"I am catching moths," I said, showing them one of my prisoners. They stared at me so incredulously that I thought they fancied me mad. "But this is the first night I have been out," I explained; "so the ghost has still to be accounted for."

"'Tis blawin' up for rain," said Mounsey. "Coom to the mill, Matt Birkett, and shelter awhile. Nowt can pass by the mill, be it bogle or body, without my seeing it from the window of my gude wife's kitchen."

"Good-night, sir," said Birkett, still eyeing me suspiciously as I added another moth to my collection.

"Good-night," I said cheerfully. "Good luck to you in your bogle-hunt."

Alas! had I but known what would follow, those were the very last words that would have crossed my lips.

The two men tramped off in the direction of Low-dore, and by the time their steps had died away in the distance, I had all my boxes full and was about to go back to the boat, when something made me glance along the mule track which led to Keswick. My heart began to throb painfully, for, gliding swiftly towards me, I saw

the Borrowdale Bogle. My lantern had gone out, but by this time my eyes had grown so accustomed to the midsummer twilight that I could clearly make out the details of the cavalier dress which Mounsey had described to us in the Market Square on the previous Saturday. The wind, which was blowing strongly from the southwest, blew back the folds of the short cloak it was wearing, and revealed the white shirt beneath and the long, thin hands, which seemed to grip fast hold of a cord slung over its shoulder, as though the bogle carried some burden. There was something so eerie in the noiseless way in which it steadily approached me, that I would have given worlds to turn and rush down to my boat. I am ashamed to say that it cost me a hard struggle to move forward and meet this uncanny creature; however, I did move slowly up to the path, and almost immediately the ghost stood stock-still. At this my courage rose a little.

“If it tries to escape I will pursue it,” I thought to myself, “and if it comes on, why, it must surely cross the plank bridge. I will stand here on the bank and see it face to face.”

There had, during the last two or three days, been much rain, and the little beck which flows down betwixt Walla Crag and Falcon Crag had become a torrent. It came roaring and tumbling over its stony bed, while the wind moaned among the trees and heavy drops of rain

began to fall, Still the ghost stood motionless, and still I kept guard by the bridge until I began to wish it would come on and end the tension of this waiting. At last it slowly glided towards me, and I candidly own that my knees began to knock together. If only the mill had been nearer I should have called to Birkett and Mounsey merely for the comfort of their fleshly presence. For, alone in a desolate bit of country late at night, a ghost is not companionable. The creature too, as it approached me more nearly, raised one of its long, bony hands and pointed a ghostly finger in my direction, at which, I knew not why, a cold shudder ran through me, and again the impulse to make for the boat was well-nigh irresistible. After all, what was to be gained by facing this Borrowdale Bogle? It was Henry Brownrigg who wanted to fathom the mystery. Why should I put myself to all this discomfort when the Under-Sheriff was the last man in the world I cared to oblige?

CHAPTER IV.

“In this sad world where mortals must
Be almost strangers,
Should we not turn to those we trust
To save us from our dangers?
Then whisper in my ear again,
And this believe—
That aught which gives thy dear heart pain
Makes my heart grieve.”

LIONEL TENNYSON.

AUDREY, although a brave girl, had been of late much out of health, and her nerves had by no means recovered from the shock of her mother's death. Hence it was natural enough that, on the Wednesday night as she rowed across the Stable Hill, and sprang ashore with the provisions for John Radcliffe, she should be a prey to all sorts of terrors. As she crossed the field a sound of something breathing close by made her tremble from head to foot, but the breather proved to be only a cow; while another sound, which seemed horribly like footsteps pursuing her, turned out to be nothing but one of the farm horses cropping the grass. How it was she could not tell, but the walk along the mule track, which had seemed quite short when she was with her uncle,

seemed now in her loneliness tediously long. Whenever she looked up through the trees, the fir-fringed outlines of Walla Crag always towered above her, until she almost despaired of ever reaching Ashness woods with her heavy burden. She was just wondering to herself whether Tim Grisedale and Meg Mounsey had spread the alarm in Grange as to the bogle, when, to her horror, she saw the figure of a man emerge from among the trees by the shore. She stood still in mortal terror. Perhaps he had not seen her? But, alas! there could be little doubt as to that, for he remained fixedly watching her, and at length took up a position close to the foot-bridge which would compel her to pass him quite close unless, indeed, she turned back. But Audrey came of a stock which did not approve of turning back, and, at last, taking her courage in both hands, she resolved to go on, hoping to scare this fellow as she had scared the shepherd. Drawing herself to her full height, she raised a threatening hand and pointed away into the distance, hoping that the man would turn to see what she was indicating. He moved slightly, and, without looking at him, she made a dash for the bridge. But instantly she felt strong arms thrown round her, and the man dragged her back from the plank.

“So,” he cried, “you are no ghost, after all! What do you mean, you miscreant, by frightening the dales-folk in this way?”

Then, in her rapture of relief, she turned and faced him; nay, she clung to him, sobbing.

"Oh, Michael! is it you, after all? I was so frightened, so dreadfully frightened!" she cried.

For a minute she recollected nothing, so exquisite was the sense that all her perils were over; that Michael, her best friend, her old playmate, could be trusted to bring her safely through all her difficulties. How tenderly, yet how closely, he held her! But he was absolutely silent, and all at once there flashed back into her mind the thought which her uncle had first suggested to her only a few evenings before. Could it indeed be that he loved her? Did that account for his formal manner in the afternoon and for this strange silence now? It was well that she could not see his face, for the passion and pain in it would have terrified her. As it was, some instinct made her come to his help by gently freeing herself from him, and turning to face the wind he tore off his cravat like a man who was choking.

"Did I startle you so much?" she asked.

He laughed wildly; it seemed so strange to him that she did not understand it was love for her that had driven all else from his mind, that it was the vehemence of a passion long controlled but still existent which had surged up within him, and that the intolerable pain in his throat made speech for the moment impossible.

But he quickly regained his self-mastery, and, turn-

ing towards her again, wrapped her cloak about her and picked up the heavy bag she had let fall.

"Where can I carry this for you?" he said, speaking now very gently. Yet there was something in his tone which made her cry. "Don't, Audrey! Don't!" he said pleadingly. "It is an eerie place and a dark night for you to be walking about alone. Only let me help you. I will ask no questions."

"You are so good, Mic!" she said, instinctively falling back to her old childish name for him. "But, though you do not ask, I must tell you the whole truth, for maybe this will bring you into trouble. Leave me to go on alone. I am on an errand to one of my own kin; for me it is a clear duty, but for you, I doubt folk would call it by a harsher name."

Instantly he knew that the fugitive John Radcliffe must be sheltering in the neighbourhood.

"I can guess your errand," he said. "I learnt by a letter from London to-day that there is a warrant out against your great-uncle; 'twas thought he had escaped to France, but I suppose he is sheltering here."

"I am glad you have guessed," said Audrey; "I am going now to him with food, and also to take him the news from Ireland. Now leave me, Mic. I know the way well, and it is not likely that I shall meet with anyone else."

"Indeed, I wish I could feel so sure of that," said

Michael, "but Mr. Brownrigg has set Mounsey and another fellow to track this Borrowdale Bogle. Very likely, if he happens to know that Mr. Radcliffe is suspected of being concerned in the plot, he calls it a ghost-hunt, but in his heart suspects that the ghost is a Jacobite. You had a very narrow escape to-night, for Mounsey and Birkett were on this very spot but a little while since and, at first, took me for the ghost. They have gone on now to the mill. Where have you sheltered your uncle?"

"In Ashness woods, in our old place there."

"Then let us come there at once. I'll row you in my boat as far as Barrow Bay, and then, if the coast is clear and Birkett still safely at Lowdore, we can climb the fell together."

Audrey was so much startled to hear of her lover's precautions as to the ghost that she could not hesitate any more as to allowing Michael to run the risk of helping her uncle.

"Henry does know that there is a warrant out against Uncle Radcliffe," she said. "Only the other night he came to search our house for him. That is why he is obliged to shelter among the hills."

"He will not be safe even there," said Michael, leading the way, as he spoke, down the wooded bank to Scarf Close Bay, where his boat was moored. "The people at the farm have a story of seeing the bogle dis-

appear into Ashness woods early one morning. We must somehow manage to get your uncle away, or assuredly the Under-Sheriff will get hold of him. Now, we had best not talk, for water carries the sound of voices as nothing else does. Lie down in the bottom of the boat and I will cover you with my cloak; the bag for your head to rest on. So! Now, I'll soon row to Barrow Bay."

Audrey crept down into the friendly shelter of the boat with a restful sense that the worst was over. Then, too, there was something natural to her in taking part in an adventure with Michael. It brought back the days of their childhood so vividly. Yet, although as she nestled down in the stern she could almost have fancied herself a child again, Michael had, on the other hand, developed in a curious way. She found herself looking up to him as though he had been some years older than herself. All too soon they reached Barrow, and Michael, having carefully reconnoitred and found the coast clear, came back to help her from the boat, and swinging the bag across his shoulder, walked with her to John Radcliffe's sheltering-place.

"I ought to tell you," he said, when they found themselves in the wood, "that in the letter I had to-day from Mistress Mary Denham she tells me that Mr. John Radcliffe is none other than the Mr. Calverley to whom Father Noel gave me a letter of introduction in London.

I met him many times, never of course guessing that he was akin to you. That, however, doubtless explains the curious attraction he always had for me."

Those last words slipped from him inadvertently. Audrey blushed, and was glad that he could not see her face.

"Who is Mistress Mary Denham?" she asked.

"A very great friend of mine," he said warmly. "The niece of Sir Wilfrid's friend, with whom we stayed in London."

Now, "friend" was a word which, like the word "servant," bore in those days more than one meaning. Audrey wondered whether, after all, Michael was this lady's lover. She ought, no doubt, to have welcomed this idea as a relief from the notion that he had loved her and was still Henry's rival. But, for some unexplained reason, she did not welcome it. It disturbed her.

"I am your oldest friend," she said, laughing a little. "I believe I could find it in my heart to be jealous of this fine lady in London."

"You do not know me, if you can speak like that," he said, hurt by her tone. "She is to me like an elder sister, whereas you—you——" he broke off abruptly, choking with emotion.

"I don't understand," said Audrey, but the tears in

her voice belied the words; she was beginning to understand only too well.

"You never did understand me," said Michael reproachfully. "You thought when I came back from Cambridge as a man that we could once more be comrades as when we were children in Borrowdale. You played with me that time at Raby Castle; at least it was play to you. Take care of that branch!"

He turned to hold it back for her, and felt two hot tears fall on his hand.

"Audrey!" he cried, dismayed to think of the confession into which he had been betrayed; "forgive me! I meant to have kept silence. I have tried my very utmost to avoid you. All I ask now is to help you in this affair with Mr. John Radcliffe. Since Mr. Brownrigg can't help you in this I have at least the right to shield you from danger. How they could let you come all this way alone at night I can't conceive."

"My grandfather liked it ill enough," said Audrey, regaining her composure with an effort, "but there was no one else. Father Noel can scarcely put his foot to the ground, and old Duncan—the only other person who knows that my uncle is here—was far too rheumatic to hobble all this way even had he known of the hiding-place. I don't deserve it, Mic, but I think God sent you to take care of me."

Her tone, and the humility of the words, brought

him back to his bearings. Once more he became his best self—manly, chivalrous, and self-forgetful. He began to discuss with her the best way of getting the fugitive to the sea-coast, and presently Audrey gave the cry which she had agreed on as the signal with her uncle, and they heard his low whistle in response. In a few minutes more they had gained the cave, and John Radcliffe sprang up from his bed of heather and ling to greet Audrey. He had been reading by the light of a small lantern carefully screened from view by a boulder; but when he saw that his niece had someone with her a sudden look of terror passed over his face.

“Who is this?” he exclaimed. “How is it that you are not alone?”

“Uncle,” cried Audrey, “you are in no danger; this is Michael Derwent, who accidentally came across me near Scarf Close Bay.”

“What! Mr. Derwent?” exclaimed the refugee, looking sharply into the face of Audrey’s companion.

Michael stood just outside the cave, and the lantern clearly revealed every feature of John Radcliffe’s face. He saw surprise, perplexity, doubt, and misgiving imprinted on it; then, at last, came a sort of mischievous amusement, strange enough when one considered his position.

“Come in, Mr. Derwent,” he said, holding out his hand and giving him a cordial welcome. “I know you

had your suspicions of me the night we last met, when that fool Enderby came in with his talk about St. Germans and his hints about the lemon. You were an honourable guest, and went away and kept silence. I know you are one who can be trusted."

"Sir," said Michael, "I am not like Mr. Brownrigg, in an official position, and am not minded to go hunting the brother of one who has always been good to me. But I must tell you frankly that I abhor your plots and will have no hand in helping you unless you promise to leave England as soon as possible."

John Radcliffe laughed good-humouredly.

"Well spoken, sir," he said. "And, as for me, I abhor your views, but I'm hanged if I won't stand by you when King James comes to his own again and the faith is once more established in England. You are just the sort to go to the stake for some trumpery opinion; but curse me! if I would let the best Catholic in the land roast you. Come, sit down and let us sup together. You have had a long walk. What's in that bag, Audrey?"

"I have brought you fresh food, uncle," she said, sitting down by him on the heather, "but there is news which first you will want to hear. King William has defeated the Catholic army in a great battle on the banks of the Boyne, and King James has deserted the Irish and has fled back to France."

John Radcliffe's face fell; he muttered a deep oath.

"That's bad hearing," he said. "It means that all is lost. Oh, what a miserable thing it is to have for king and leader a man who thinks first of saving his own skin! Your Dutchman lacks the fine manner of the Stuarts, but, curse him! he is at anyrate a brave soldier and a born leader. Well, my pretty niece, the game is over. I throw up the sponge. And now the question is, how am I to get to the sea-coast and make my way to Ireland or to France?"

"It must be done quickly," said Michael. "Indeed I think we had best shift your hiding-place to-night, sir," and then together they told him of the serious risk he ran of being discovered by the Under-Sheriff.

"Mounsey and Birkett watch the mule track from Keswick to Borrowdale," said Audrey, "and we could scarcely escape through Grange, but surely by boat we might safely manage it. Pursuit would be difficult."

"You must somehow start by to-morrow night, at latest, for Workington," said Michael. "There you will easily be able to take ship. With your permission, sir, I will go to-night to Lord's Island and talk things over with Father Noel."

John Radcliffe listened in silence to this suggestion; a sense of shame stole over him—shame such as he had never before experienced. He looked across the shallow cave to the place where Michael sat, his fine,

expressive face clearly outlined against the grey rock; a boyish face still, though bearing signs of that inner conflict without which no really strong character can be developed.

Should he, as Father Noel urged him, own the truth? The words trembled upon his lips, but then he reflected that Michael's indignation against the unknown father who had deserted him had been expressed in no measured terms in London—that he had then been only thirsting to discover the man for the sake of avenging his mother. He dared not own the truth now, for might not Michael refuse to help him in his escape? Might he not even, in his just wrath, denounce him to the authorities?

There was silence in the cave for some minutes; both Audrey and her uncle instinctively watched Michael, who was evidently deep in thought. Outside the rain pattered down steadily, in the way truly characteristic of Cumberland.

“I have it,” said Michael at length. “This rain of the last few days is all in our favour, for the Derwent is fuller than I have ever known it. My plan is this. Let us take Mr. Radcliffe to-night to our hiding-place in the Happy Valley; that is a place where not a soul but ourselves is likely to go. Hidden there among the brushwood, he will be safe for twenty-four hours, and we will come to-morrow night, landing opposite Manesty

meads, and get him safely into our boat. Then we can all three row the length of Derwentwater, and at the outlet at the further end, where the Derwent flows towards Bassenthwaite, I will to-morrow moor one of the St. Herbert's Isle boats, and will stow away in it a disguise of some sort for Mr. Radcliffe. He and I together can then row to Bassenthwaite, where he can be set down well on his way to Workington by dawn, while you will have quietly rowed back alone the short distance to Lord's Island."

"Why not take the one boat the whole distance?" said John Radcliffe.

"It will be better for Audrey to go home," he replied; "the risk would be less for all of us. Besides, it will be light by the time I can return, for, though we shall rush down the Derwent easily enough with the current, it will be stiff work getting the boat back. If she were there with me, then suspicion would be roused, but that I should be out alone in one of Sir Wilfrid's boats will surprise nobody. It is well known that I go out fishing at all hours."

"Well done, Mr. Derwent. You have the brain of a conspirator, or shall we say of a statesman?" said John Radcliffe, laughing. "I would we could reckon you on our side, for we need men of your sort. Half of them are feather-pates like young Enderby, who betrayed us to you last month in my chambers."

"It is quite possible that Father Noel will have some better scheme," said Michael. "He is a wonderful man for seeing every move in the game. But, unless you hear to the contrary, expect us to-morrow night at eleven o'clock."

"But, Michael," said Audrey, who had listened in silence to the arrangements, "you are taking all the risk on yourself. It is not fair. What is my Uncle Radcliffe to you?"

"He is just that—your uncle," said Michael quietly, "and the brother of Sir Nicholas, to whose kindness I owe much."

John Radcliffe seemed about to speak, but thought better of it. As a man of the world he was ready to doubt the possibility of anyone undertaking so risky a piece of work when there was no hope of personal gain, but however things turned out he could not see that in this matter Michael could be the gainer. He was forced to believe that the fellow acted really out of a chivalrous desire to help the girl he loved but could not wed. The only thing he could gain was the brief satisfaction of baffling the schemes of his rival, the Under-Sheriff, and a man would scarcely run the risk of being thrown into prison as aiding and abetting the Jacobites for such a momentary triumph as that.

"Well, let us eat and drink!" he said with a careless laugh, "for to-morrow who can say what may befall us?"

Mr. Derwent, here's to our next merry meeting!" and he drained a cup of the claret which old Duncan had stowed away in Audrey's bag.

Then, having done their best to obliterate all traces of his stay in the cave, they tramped on through the woods above high Lowdore and Shepherd's Crag, until they gained the tiny wooded glen hidden away by Grange Fell, which, as children, they had called the Happy Valley. At the south-eastern part of this tiny dale, not far from a brawling mountain stream, there was a sheltered nook, where, long ago, they used to hide. They had to come right down to the stream before they could find it in the dim light; but Michael had always been good at making landmarks, and he had only to stand at a certain bend of the stream and face the east to discover the exact nook he wanted.

"Here it is," he cried, "up this bank to the bent crabtree; then there will be a thorn-bush just to your left, and higher up still an old bent yew. Close beneath that is a rock which will give you shelter from the rain; but beware that you do not stir from the wood after dawn, for you are near to Grange, and might come across the dales-folk."

John Radcliffe promised to be most cautious, and they left him as soon as possible, for, judging it unsafe to risk passing the mill, they were forced to climb the fell once more and tramp all round the way they had

come, over the crags and through the woods towards Ashness Farm. Nor could they afford to take the walk easily, being in terror lest the dawn should overtake them. It was then, as they hurried along in the drenching rain, that Audrey began to realise what a man Michael had become. Never once did he let her feel that it was aught but the most natural thing in the world that they two should be out together alone on that wild night, nor did he again in any way allude to himself or his own affairs. He talked of their plans for the rescue of Mr. Radcliffe; he even made himself talk a little of Henry Brownrigg, a sort of loyalty to the absent lover goading him on, though the words half-choked him.

But Audrey, much as she looked up to him, could not then realise all that it cost him to pilot her through the dark wood, to feel her clinging to his arm, and to take her up and carry her over Barrow Beck when, worn out with fatigue, the rushing water made her turn giddy as she stood on the slippery stones. Later on she knew, but now she only felt a childlike gratitude to him for proving so trusty a helper.

At last they had scrambled down to Derwentwater, and, half-dead with fatigue, she lay down once more in the boat and let Michael wrap his cloak round her and row her back to Lord's Island. Here Father Noel and old Duncan sat up waiting for her, and, after hurried

explanations, she was glad to steal away to bed, leaving Michael to settle the details of the escape with the old priest.

"Did Mr. Radcliffe tell you nothing?" asked Father Noel, looking eagerly and hopefully into the young man's grave face.

"There was nothing to tell," said Michael. "I should in any case have recognised him, but oddly enough this very day I had a letter telling me that James Calverley was but an assumed name, and that a warrant was out against Mr. Radcliffe."

The poor old priest turned his head away in bitter disappointment. Surely, he thought, John Radcliffe might have availed himself of what seemed a heaven-sent opportunity of owning his son and heir.

"Mr. Radcliffe is a selfish man," he said. "Truly I think he deserves to be trapped by the Under-Sheriff. Why do you risk your safety for him?"

"I fear I don't think much of him," said Michael, colouring, "but it seems about the last chance I shall ever have of serving Audrey."

All at once, without any warning, his strength gave way. The unspoken sympathy, the real comprehension of Father Noel, proved too much for him. Exhausted by the long struggle of the night, he buried his face in his arms and began to sob.

"Poor boy," said the old priest kindly, "life has been

hard on you. Yet you are not the first who has had to stand by in silence and see the life of his best beloved wrecked by a mistaken marriage. Besides, there is room for hope even now. Already the marriage has been twice postponed. Who knows that it will ever take place?"

"The banns were asked on Sunday in St. Kentigern's," said Michael, steadying his voice with an effort.

He was bitterly ashamed of having broken down, for he had been reared among the dales-folk of Cumberland, who bear the extremity of mental or bodily pain and make no sign. But Lucy Carleton's mother had been of Welsh origin, and there was much of the emotional Keltic nature in Michael.

"You see, sir," he continued, "it does not need much imagination to picture things as they are from Henry Brownrigg's point of view. He is moving heaven and earth to get hold of the heir to the Goldrill estate, Mr. John Radcliffe. When he has got him safely out of the way Audrey will be the heiress, and everything will be at his disposal when once they are married."

"Yes; no doubt that is his scheme," said Father Noel, and then he fell into a fit of musing. It was terrible to him to know that the true heir was actually talking to him yet that he was absolutely powerless to end the great wrong which had been done to him. To

break the secrecy of the confessional was, for such a man, out of the question, yet the sense of the horrible injustice which he had silently to witness almost maddened him. It was in vain that he reminded himself of the far worse secrets which had often been confided to priests; the most hideous conspiracy, the most horrible murder, would not just now seem to him so intolerable a load as this cowardice of John Radcliffe and the prospect of seeing Michael and Audrey, the two he had known and loved ever since their childhood, sacrificed to a man so tyrannical and narrow as Henry Brownrigg.

As a Catholic, he would have felt it his duty in other circumstances to urge upon Audrey the marriage with Mr. Salkeld, knowing that he would probably bring her over to his faith, but his kindly heart and his sense of fairness inclined him more and more to see things from Michael's side. If anything could make up to the boy for all these years of ignominy and loneliness it would be such a marriage. But he sighed as he thought of it, for indeed nothing seemed less likely to come about.

"Don't give up hope, lad," he said, laying a kindly hand on Michael's shoulder. "We Borrowdale folk know well enough that it's often the dark dawn that makes the fair day; while with bright sunshine at six in the morning you'll as likely as not have rain by noon.

By-the-bye, this downpour will be somewhat rough on Mr. Radcliffe."

"Yes, but 'twill fill the Derwent, and that is all in our favour," said Michael. And therewith he fell to discussing his idea for the escape, while Father Noel groaned aloud to think that his knee made it impossible for him even to hobble down as far as the boat. He longed sorely to be able to lend a hand, and, above all, he longed for a chance of once more urging John Radcliffe to own the truth. However, it was clearly impossible for him to attempt anything of the sort; he could only have been a hindrance and a danger to the others.

CHAPTER V.

“Weep no more, nor sigh, nor groan,
Sorrow recalls not time that’s gone;
Violets pluck’d the sweetest rain
Makes not fresh nor grow again;
Trim thy locks, look cheerfully,
Fate’s hidden ends eyes cannot see.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

“WELL, Birkett,” said the Under-Sheriff, as the man appeared on Thursday morning at his room in Keswick, “have you traced the bogle yet?”

“Noa, sir, but us thought us had ’en by the heels last night, nigh upon eleven o’clock. Howiver, it was arter all nowt but Mr. Derwent, who had rowed across from Herbert’s Isle.”

“Mr. Derwent?” said the Under-Sheriff, sitting up with an expectant look. “And pray what was he doing at that time of night?”

“Why, sir, he had a dark lantern wid ’en, and, sure as I stan’ here, us were mortal flayte, thinkin’ him to be the bogle. But he just laughed and called out to Mounsey that he was gettin’ moths off the tree-trunks. And, Lor’ bless you, sir, he verily was doin’ it and a-puttin’ ’em in boxes in a daft fashion, as though the

plaguy beasts was worth money. You know, sir, there still is folk that say he is a changelin' and no' a'together canny. Dickon over at Herbert's Isle, he always said when he first set eyes on him he could hardly bring himself to touch the crittur for fear it should bewitch him."

"Pooh! there's nothing uncanny about him," said the Under-Sheriff; "and as to being daft, why, man, his brains are only too sharp. Depend upon it, he was up to no good last night. He trapped you as well as the moths. They were just a blind. Look you, Birkett, hurry off to the best place for viewing the whole of Derwentwater. Luckily it is clear enough after the rain. When you see a boat leaving Herbert's Isle, watch the direction it takes, and when Mr. Derwent comes ashore, just quietly follow him, taking care that he does not see that you are dogging his steps. Bring me word later on in the day as to his movements."

"Now," he exclaimed to himself as his messenger withdrew, "I have at last got the clue I wanted. And to think Michael Derwent is embroiled as well! That is a stroke of luck I had not looked for. Depend upon it, he has been hand and glove with that traitor John Radcliffe all these months in London. I see it all now! That was the meaning of his guarded answer the other day when he spoke of the state of the country. The fellow would easily deceive Sir Wilfrid Lawson, who is

too good-natured and too much of a joker to suspect sinister designs in those he has to deal with. I shouldn't wonder if Derwent is all the time a Papist, though he does put in an appearance still at Crosthwaite Church. He would be ready enough to change his views to curry favour with Father Noel and Sir Nicholas, and so promote his designs upon Audrey. Well, thank heaven, I have netted him now, or very nearly! And next month we shall be safely married."

He rubbed his hands with satisfaction. It became more and more clear to him that the bogle was none other than John Radcliffe, the Jacobite, and Michael doubtless had been employed by Sir Nicholas to carry food to the fugitive in his hiding-place. No one would be better fitted for such a task, since he knew every inch of the country around.

Meanwhile Birkett waited the whole morning, and no boat put off from St. Herbert's Isle. At length, in the afternoon, when, what with the heat of the sun and his wakeful night, sleep had almost overpowered him, he descried a boat rowing slowly northward. Hastening down from the little eminence he had chosen for his watch-tower, he made his way to the point towards which the boat was steering, and was just near enough to see Michael mooring it in a bend of the river Derwent, a little to the north-west of the place where the Greta flows into it. Having secured the boat, Michael

wandered off towards some trees at a little distance, where he went through a series of operations which utterly mystified his unknown watcher. He seemed to be smearing the tree-trunks with something sticky, and the sight made the superstitious Birkett shiver, for this distinctly savoured of the black art. Could the Borrowdale foundling be a wizard? Cautiously creeping after him, Birkett examined the mysterious tree-trunks and scratched his head with an air of hopeless bewilderment. Altogether he counted twelve trees bearing the mystic mark. Had he dared to think this curious and uncanny rite was anything so simple, he would have said that the trees had been just daubed with treacle or sugar. His imagination rose to such a height, however, that he was convinced the letter "w" was traced upon one tree, and, full of glee at this great and brilliant discovery, he lost no time in following Michael at a discreet distance. Michael, having some spare time on his hands, crossed the fields slowly in the hot July sun and made his way to Hye Hill, to visit his old Quaker friend. As for Birkett, he lay in a shady nook on the grass not far off, and waited for a couple of hours, then traced his man to a house in the Market Square, and returned to his master with a glowing account of his discovery.

"Mr. Derwent be now in the house of old Snoggles, the fiddler," he said, "where I reckon he is safe to stay

for some time. Do you think, sir, the letter stands for "*watched*," and is to warn the bogle?"

"Maybe," said Henry, with a smile. "But, anyhow, Matt, go on with your watching. I think we shall trap the bogle at last, and I myself shall join to-night in the hunt. Go now and have a tankard of ale at the *Wool-pack*, but since the weather is hot, see that you sit on the bench outside the inn and keep an eye on Zinogle's door. Then, when Mr. Derwent comes out, track him once more, and be back here again by nine o'clock to tell me of his movements."

Matt, mystified, but much elated by his success and the praise of the Under-Sheriff, bowed himself out, and Henry Brownrigg began to consider what other men beside Birkett and the constable he had better take with him for the evening's hunt. Was it possible that the letter traced on the tree stood for Whitehaven or Workington? And was the boat expressly moored there for John Radcliffe's use after dark?

Meanwhile Michael was leaning back in Zinogle's high-backed chair, forgetting his anxiety for awhile as his old friend played the airs he most loved on his fiddle. He had come in tired and despondent, but it was impossible to listen long to Zinogle's cheerful music without becoming imbued with hope. And, as the old man played the melody known as *Lady Frances Nevill's Delight*, there floated back to Michael's mind the re-

membrance of Father Noel's words about the dark dawn bringing the fair day and the duty of eternal hope. Hope, too, was the idea which, from his childhood, the old fiddler had tried to imbue him with. Was he always to go on hoping? he wondered, and reflected with a rueful smile that, after all, hope was a diet upon which a man was apt to grow lean. Well, at least there was something to be done for Audrey that night. He was the one man in the world who could and would protect her now, and there was something stimulating in the thought that even Henry Brownrigg could not rob him of that privilege.

"Bravo, Zinogle!" he said, as the old man laid down his fiddle at last, "you always drive the devil out of me with your music. Promise me this, old friend, if ever I should be in trouble, don't forget me, but come to me with your fiddle under your arm; then, even with death staring me in the face, I should get some comfort and pleasure."

"Trouble!" said the German lightly. "Never think of it beforehand, boy. If it comes, why, you can be trusted to bear it like a man; but till then hope's your mainstay. And as for coming to you, I should like to see anything that would hinder me! For, as you very well know, in this mad, topsy-turvy world, you and my pipe and my fiddle are the only friends left me."

And, taking up the violin once more, he played right cheerfully the old tune of *Love will find out a Way*.

When that was ended, Michael, bidding his godfather farewell, left the house and the little town and wandered on to Castle Hill. The sun had just set, and Skiddaw was bathed in an unearthly radiance more beautiful than the colours of the opal. He stood for many minutes looking at the wonderful view, so familiar and so dear to him. There were the fells over which he and Audrey had climbed only a few hours before; there was the dear old Castle Crag, with its wilderness of trees guarding the entrance to Borrowdale, and in the background his beloved Glaramara, with its rugged heights all roseate in the evening glow, while far away, yet clearly to be seen, were Great End and Scawfell Pike, recalling many a day of adventure with Father Noel for his companion. Dearer than all, there was Derwentwater itself, lying like a silver shield down before him, with Lord's Island and the old house, and a light already in one of the windows, which shone like a pale primrose in contrast with the ruddy gold and crimson of the sunset.

He looked down at it sadly, thinking how soon Audrey would have left it for ever—left it for that very doubtful happiness of being mistress of Millbeck Hall.

And yet they still preached hope to him! Both Father Noel and old Zinogle always harped on that one string. The utmost, as it seemed, that he could now hope for was to be some protection to her on this eventful night; beyond that night no ray shone to lighten his darkness. He glanced with a sigh across the still water to the place where he knew his boat was moored, and then out beyond to the gleam of mellow light which showed where Bassenthwaite lay. By the time he reached that place in the early hours of the night, he and John Radcliffe would be alone, and Audrey would be safely once more on the island.

With sad eyes he turned away and went down the hill, until, finding a fallen tree-trunk which had been well baked by the long summer day's sunshine, he stretched himself on it and tried to spend the rest of his waiting-time in sleep. What were those words about hope in the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*? Just as his eyelids grew heavy the quotation darted back into his mind:—

Hope is a lover's staff! Walk hence with that,
And manage it against despairing thoughts.

And it was just about that time that Matt Birkett returned to the Under-Sheriff with the news that Mr. Derwent had stood for some time on the top of Castle

Hill, as though watching for something, and that he now lay down at the foot of the hill, to all appearance asleep.

“Go and sup with all speed at the *Woolpack*,” said Henry Brownrigg, “and be back here in half an hour. Our bogle-hunt must begin.”

CHAPTER VI.

"If twenty crosses be written for you in God's book, they will come to nineteen, and then at last to one, and after that to nothing."

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

WHEN Michael awoke it was quite dusk. The sleep had greatly refreshed him, and, as he strode across the fields to Stable Hills Farm, his spirits rose and he felt eager for the night's adventure. Keeping a little to the south of the boathouse, he waited in the place that had been agreed upon until he saw, in the fast-deepening gloom, the light in the window above the great door extinguished. It had been kindled in the Lord's Island house early in the evening as a sign that all was well and that Audrey would come as arranged, and now that it was out, he knew that she must be getting into the boat, and that in a few minutes she would be with him. His heart throbbed fast when, out of the gloom, he saw the outline of the dark hull approaching, and heard the sound of her muffled oars close by. In another moment she was at the shore, and, leaping into the boat, he pushed off again, taking the second pair of oars that had been provided and giving her a whispered greeting.

"The other boat is all right?" she inquired.

“Yes, safely moored near Portinscale, and stowed away in it I have put some old clothes that Dickon was keeping for a scarecrow, and a ragged smock which would make any king look like a clown.”

Audrey laughed beneath her breath, and they rowed steadily on, taking care to give the mill of Lowdore as wide a berth as might be, lest Mounsey should descry them.

Now, to find the entrance to the Derwent at the south end of Derwentwater is no easy matter even by daylight, for the marshy ground, with its wilderness of reeds, its narrow channels, which often prove mere *culs-de-sac*, and its absence of landmarks, is bewildering. But by night the task is hard indeed, and, well as Michael knew the country, he was sorely baffled in the midnight gloom. At last, however, they struck the right channel, and, after that, every bend being familiar to them both, they got on easily enough, mooring the boat on the opposite side of the river to Manesty meads, and then setting off across the wet grass towards the entrance to the Happy Valley.

The night was clear and the stars were shining brightly, so that they could plainly distinguish the outlines of the craggy hills which surrounded the glen, and, guided by the stream, they walked on swiftly, Audrey springing lightly over the boggy ground in the raiment of the ghost and thankful not to have heavy skirts trailing after her in the darkness.

"Ah, Mic!" she exclaimed, as he helped her over a bit of ground that had become a swamp since the heavy rain, "two are better than one. I should have been in a panic of terror many a time this night had it not been for you."

"Thank God I am here, then!" said Michael. "It makes me shudder even now to think how nearly Matt Birkett caught you the other night."

"Ah! and it was not only of human beings I was in terror," said Audrey; "I kept on thinking how it would be if the mock bogle and the real bogle were to come face to face."

He laughed softly at this idea, and then they both started violently, for a screech-owl flew past them with its melancholy, foreboding cry.

"Well, if we meet nothing more dangerous than screech-owls and bogles we shall carry through our night's work easily enough," said Michael cheerfully. "Don't you think you might give the call now?"

They paused by the stream, while her clear, yet soft cry sounded out into the night, and was echoed by John Radcliffe in his shelter under the old yew tree. He came striding down the hill, and, leaping the stream, gave them an eager greeting.

"Is all well?" he inquired.

"Yes, your boat awaits you," they replied.

"That's good hearing," he said cheerfully. "I should

have rotted had I been mewed up under that old tree any longer. Talk about King Charles in the oak, he was lapped in luxury compared with me! And, when at last the deluge ended, I didn't dare come out of that apology for an ark, since a boy saw fit to feed his flock of sheep at the other end of the valley. Well, little ghost, how many rustics have you scared on the way here?"

"We have not seen a soul," said Audrey blithely. "Here, sir, is a packet of money which my grandfather sends you with his best wishes for your safe journeying to France."

"That's good of him," said John Radcliffe. "Mr. Derwent, did you remember the disguise?"

"Yes, sir," said Michael; "I have robbed a scarecrow in your behalf."

This greatly tickled the Jacobite's fancy, and they had some difficulty in making him hush his laughter as they came down once more to the winding river and got into the boat.

"Give me the oars," he said, "and Audrey, do you steer. I shall be 'glad to stretch my limbs once more.'"

And then silence fell on the party, while swiftly, with the current in their favour, they rowed down to the reedy entrance to Derwentwater and out on to the broad expanse. So still was the night that Audrey could see the stars reflected in the water as in a mirror, while the

gloomy heights of Maiden-moor and Catbells loomed darkly upon the western shore. The only sign that any other human beings besides themselves existed in the neighbourhood, lay in the twinkling rushlight in the children's room on St. Herbert's Isle, and the light in her grandfather's bedchamber on Lord's Island.

The two men had kept on their dark coats for fear their white shirt-sleeves should betray them to any chance watcher, but Michael, heated with rowing, had thrown off his hat, so that the night breeze gently blew back the long, dark hair of his peruke. She fancied that his face gleamed curiously white in the dim starlight, and once, when a sudden flicker of summer lightning illuminated everything for a minute, she saw that there were lines of pain round his lips, and in his eyes a look which made her think of the eyes of a wounded stag she had once seen in Borrowdale. That was years ago, when Michael had first gone to Cambridge, and she remembered that it was her lover who had been out deer-stalking and that the wounded stag had fallen a victim to his gun. She shivered a little. Was it because the parting was so near at hand that he bore that look?

There was another quiver of sheet-lightning; this time he stopped rowing for a minute, glanced round to see the opening to the Derwent, and whispered to her to steer to the left. Against the dancing light Skiddaw

rose majestically, while below, in silvery brightness, the Greta flowed into the Derwent, and all the reeds and rushes along the banks shimmered and sparkled like the spears of a great army.

"The current is strong; keep well to the left, close to the rushes," said Michael. "Now we are almost there; I moored her to that willow round the next bend. Ship your oars, sir," he added, glancing back at the Jacobite.

John Radcliffe silently obeyed. Audrey, with both hands on the tiller, kept her eyes fixed on the willow-tree, and already they had caught sight of the moored boat, when suddenly there was a blaze of light from a lantern held by someone half-hidden by the reeds; strong hands clutched their boat and made it fast, while, with an effort which nearly capsized them, John Radcliffe was dragged ashore by three men who flung themselves upon him. The bearer of the lantern stepped forward and touched him on the shoulder.

"In the King's name!" he said, and Audrey, shrinking down into her place in the stern, knew that it was her lover.

She felt a hand on hers and, lifting her face, saw Michael stooping over her.

"Quick," he whispered, almost lifting her on to the seat he had quitted. "Take the oars and row home. I'll cut the rope while they are getting me ashore."

She was like one stunned, and it was only under his compulsion that she obeyed, while he, with ears sharpened by anxiety, was listening to the confused babel of voices.

"There be two other gentlemen in the boat, sir," cried Birkett. "Be us to mak' 'em all prisoner?"

Henry Brownrigg turned, having been too much occupied in seeing the constable bind John Radcliffe's arms to heed anything else.

"To be sure, Birkett," he said. "So, Mr. Derwent, you have changed your views! Drag him out, men. What's the good of resisting, gentlemen; we are five of us here and are bound to take you."

As he spoke he hung the lantern on a branch of the willow and stepped closer to the boat, from the bows of which Michael was struggling with his would-be captors on the bank.

He had unsheathed his knife and was desperately sawing at the cord with which the men had secured the prow. Birkett, only, divined what he was about, and gripped his arm like a vice, whereupon Michael shifted his knife to the other hand, gave the fellow a touch with the point, which made him start back for a moment, and then in triumph severed the cord.

"Pull off!" he cried to Audrey, and at the same moment he took his assailants utterly by surprise by

yielding and leaping on shore so suddenly that he sent three of them sprawling on to the ground.

But Henry Brownrigg was not to be so easily baffled; he gripped fast hold of the boat before the rower had time to get fairly off.

"Hold there!" he cried. "You don't escape us now, my man! Get up, you fellows, and make that other gentleman prisoner."

He broke off, for Michael put a hand on his shoulder and said in a tone which could not reach the others:—

"Sir, do you not see that it is Mr. Radcliffe's niece in disguise? For God's sake, nay, for her sake and your own, let her row home and say no more."

For a minute the Under-Sheriff was struck dumb. Then a look of fury crossed his face; he ground his teeth with rage.

"Youdale and Birkett, come and bind this villain before he does any more mischief," he exclaimed, and the men stepped forward, glad enough to pinion one who had given them so much trouble.

"Tighter!" cried the Under-Sheriff, pleased to see his enemy wince a little as the cord cut into his wrists.

Just then there came a sound like a stifled sob from the river.

"Henry, he only came to protect me!" cried Audrey pleadingly, and at the piteous, girlish voice the constable

and his helpers started in amaze and stared stupidly at the figure in the boat.

"Oh, I understand it all now, madam; you needn't explain," said Henry Brownrigg scathingly. "My good men, this lady was to have been wedded to me next month, but she prefers masquerading at midnight in men's attire. Be good enough to help her from the boat. 'Tis a pity that the spectators are not more numerous and that our theatre is indifferently lighted," and with a coarse jest he turned mercilessly towards the shrinking figure of his *fiancée*.

All this time Michael had stood by in silence, maddened by the sense of his helplessness, but that last ribald speech was too much for his powers of endurance. With a dexterous movement of the head, he suddenly jerked the lantern off the branch of the willow, and then, before the Under-Sheriff or his men could rescue it from the ground, gave it a kick which sent it spinning through the air, to splash into the middle of the river and sink to the bottom.

The men were just dragging Audrey ashore, when the little group found themselves in sudden darkness. John Radcliffe laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. But the Under-Sheriff, understanding the chivalrous thought of his rival, only hated him the more, and, with a savage determination not to be baulked, called upon Youdale to get out the tinder-box.

"There is a gorse-bush a few paces off; set it alight," he said peremptorily, and the men obeyed, while the others brought the three prisoners forward, not a little curious to see more plainly how the plotters would look.

In truth it was a strange scene; it appealed even to such a case-hardened man of the world as John Radcliffe. There they stood, with the dark outline of Causey Pike and Rowling End showing out clearly for background, while every now and then the Newlands Valley would be bathed in the dazzling radiance of the summer lightning. The flaming gorse-bush cast a strong light upon Michael and Audrey, but, whereas in the boat she had been merely a terrified girl, she had now suddenly developed into a woman, and stood there with a patient dignity which partly hid the bitter pain she was suffering. John Radcliffe saw that Michael was less successful in concealing the indignation that raged within him, and strange thoughts passed through the elder man's mind as he watched that curiously familiar face with its Welsh outlines, its reproachful eyes. As for the north-countrymen, they looked uncomfortable and ill at ease, while the Under-Sheriff, his tall, portly figure and handsome features showing to great advantage in the lurid light, might have stood for an impersonation of Milton's Archfiend, so full of pride and malice did he appear.

"Did you know that there was a warrant out against Mr. John Radcliffe?" he demanded of Michael.

"Yes, I learnt it yesterday."

"How?"

"It was casually mentioned in a letter I had from London."

"Did the letter say that Mr. Radcliffe was in this part of the country?"

"No, I learnt that later on."

"Who from?"

"I was out nothing that night, as Mounsey and Birkett will have told you; later on I came across the Borrowdale Bogle, and discovered that it was Mistress Radcliffe carrying food to her uncle."

Henry Brownrigg turned upon Audrey at that, speaking in the clear, cutting tone which in itself seems an insult.

"I begin to understand, madam," he said. "You have deceived me for several days past, and not content with that, you elected to spend last night in the company of the Borrowdale bastard, though knowing quite well that he is my hated rival, a man I ——"

He broke off, for John Radcliffe had stepped forward.

"Sir," said the Jacobite, in a cool, mocking voice, "it really distresses me to see you labouring so unnecessarily under a mistake. Also I must insist on your

withdrawing the epithet you used. Michael is my son by my first marriage, and you will hardly say that he was doing an outrageous thing in protecting his cousin, Mistress Radcliffe, in her walk to my hiding-place."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at their feet the little group could hardly have been more startled; as for Michael, he stood like a man in a dream. Could it really be that at last he had found the truth he had so long sought? And was this Jacobite, to whom from the very first he had felt drawn, the father he had learnt to detest for the wrong done him as an infant and for the way in which his mother had been treated? Then he remembered how the tardy acknowledgment had been made to save Audrey's reputation, and he thought no more of past wrongs, but only of present gratitude.

He crossed over towards Henry Brownrigg, who stood petrified with astonishment, his face dark with conflicting emotions. "Mr. Brownrigg," said Michael, "I am ready of course to take the responsibility of having helped my father to escape, but now that you understand all, let your betrothed row back to Lord's Island."

"Ha! betrothed, did you say?" said the Under-Sheriff, with a mocking laugh. "Nay, I call you all to witness that I return my troth to this audacious masquerader. The doublet and hose are doubtless very becoming, but for my future wife I prefer the petticoat.

If Mistress Radcliffe apes the ways of men she must be treated as a man. You, sir, will, I understand, be heir to the estate of Goldrill in Patterdale when your Jacobite father is hung, but as things stand you seem likely to spend your days in gaol, so the inheritance will not avail you much. I am under an obligation to you, however, for the belief that she would inherit that estate would have been my sole inducement to overlook the midnight ramblings of our dainty cavalier yonder and still to wed her."

"You vile coward!" cried Michael, his eyes blazing with anger. "How dare you insult my cousin? The moment I am free I will call you to account for it."

Henry bowed ironically.

"I accept your challenge with the greatest pleasure," he said. "Now, men, march these Jacocite plotters back to Keswick, and since there is no more cord we must e'en let the Borrowdale Bogle go unbound. Birkett, you have been ghost-stalking since Saturday. I commend her to your keeping. Have a care, man, that she doesn't slip through your fingers."

Michael glanced for one moment into the face of the woman he loved. Since that appeal to Henry from the boat she had not uttered a word; her old playfellow's pain prompted that stifled cry, but her own suffering seemed to have half-paralysed her. She bore the look of stony despair which one sees at times in the face of

the bereaved, for in truth those words which Henry Brownrigg had spoken, that exhibition of merciless, brutal cruelty, had shattered into a thousand fragments the image of her lover which she had so long cherished. The man she had admired—yes, and loved with her whole heart—was absolutely dead; she saw him now as he really was, and the blank desolation of her heart was indescribable.

She longed to lie down and die, but there was the miserable necessity of tramping the weary way to Keswick. By the time they had crossed the dewy fields, however, and had reached the lane leading from Cros-thwaite Church to the little market town, her steps had begun to falter; it seemed as if she could go no further. Michael, who walked just behind her, lagged a little and spoke beneath his breath to the constable.

“Greenhow, you are a good-hearted fellow,” he said. “Tell the Under-Sheriff that Mistress Radcliffe is faint; she might rest at Hye Hill. See, they have a light yet burning.”

But the Under-Sheriff was not in a compliant mood.

“No favouritism,” he said shortly. “She will spend the night in the lock-up; but if she is faint, why, let her rest a minute in the porch yonder. I see the Quaker has a bench on each side.”

By this time Audrey felt as if her last hour had come; each time Henry spoke a quiver of pain shot

through her heart; it was as though the ghost of dead love was trying to struggle back to life. Blind, giddy, gasping for breath, she let the constable put her down on the bench, while, for a moment, she must have drifted quite away into unconsciousness. When she came to herself, she found that someone had opened the door of the house and that light was streaming upon the little group in the porch; she could see that Michael, his arms still bound with cruel tightness to his sides, stepped eagerly forward.

"Sir," he said, "I claim your help for our kinswoman, Audrey Radcliffe; she is faint with fatigue."

The old Quaker, ignoring the cavalier costume, perhaps scarcely noticing it, came quickly towards the prostrate figure and laid his hand on the long, shining curls that half-hid the face.

"Friend Audrey," he said, "welcome to my house! Come in and rest."

"Nay, Mr. Quaker," said Henry Brownrigg, with a harsh laugh, "your fair kinswoman must lie to-night in the lock-up. She hath mixed herself up with a treasonable, Popish plot that even you would not approve of."

Audrey caught at her old kinsman's hand, gripping it much as Michael had done in that paroxysm of pain when he had first met him. The old Quaker knew very well what such an act meant, for in his time he had comforted many.

"There is no disgrace in a gaol, Audrey," he said quietly. "Yet I am right glad to see thee ere thou dost go to it. Wait awhile, for my wife is suffering from the ague, and I have on the fire a posset keeping hot for her. Thou shalt drink some of it, and it will hearten thee for the rest of thy walk."

His tone soothed her, and it was perhaps quite as much the kindly tenderness of his manner as the virtues of the sack posset which restored her strength. Her blank, desolate life, which had been wrecked by Henry Brownrigg, began to put forth little shoots of hope. Did not this old kinsman, though so little known to her, treat her with the loving thoughtfulness of a father? Into her frozen heart there stole a gratitude which she could never have put into words. And she grew strong to face the hard future as she remembered how, at the worst, her own kinsfolk had stood by her—how indeed their one thought had been to shelter and spare her.

In a few minutes they had looked their last on the old Quaker and were marching on into Keswick, but the thought of that peaceful face, with its quiet, kindly eyes, lingered with Michael and Audrey like a good angel. How he had suffered in the past! and how well he must have suffered to come through it all with such a look!

And so it came about that Henry Brownrigg, who had expected passionate protestations and entreaties that

at least Audrey might be spared the ignominy of spending the night in the lock-up, was entirely baulked, for the three prisoners calmly allowed themselves to be led in by Birkett and Greenhow, nor did they address a single word to him. He walked away to his quarters at the *Royal Oak* in high dudgeon.

CHAPTER VII.

“But Hope her animating voice applied.”

BOWLES.

WHEN Greenhow had lighted his lantern the prisoners saw that the lock-up was a bare, flagged place about nine feet square. It had been cleaned out on Monday, after the removal of a refractory prisoner to Cocker-mouth, and it seemed to be absolutely without furniture. The constable, however, said he would fetch some straw, and speedily returned with a big bundle of it under one arm and a pitcher of water in the other.

“Can’t you take off these cords?” said John Radcliffe.

“I durstn’t do it, sir,” said Greenhow. “The Under-Sheriff says they are to be left till you’ve been before the magistrate in the morning.”

However, the fellow did what he could to make their imprisonment tolerable to them, and finally left them with a friendly “Good-night,” locking and bolting the door after him, and retreating to his own home with echoing steps down the silent street.

There was an unglazed window high up in the north wall, and between the iron bars the faint, grey light of

early dawn was beginning to steal. A clock in Sir Joseph Banks' house just opposite struck two.

"Mic," said Audrey, "let me bathe your wrists for you; they are all bleeding."

"Yes, that's a happy thought," said John Radcliffe. "Those brutes have cut into the flesh."

To tell the truth, Michael would have endured much severer pain for the bliss of feeling those soft, womanly hands tending him. He was startled, however, when Audrey gave a sad little laugh.

"Why, how foolish I am!" she said, beginning quietly to undo the tight knots. "I will set you free and have the cords on again before Greenhow comes in the morning."

Then Uncle Radcliffe chuckled softly to himself, like a man well pleased.

"Did I not tell you that you had the best wits of us all?" he said. "I'm hanged if the thought of your unloosing us ever crossed my mind."

Before long she had freed them both. Michael then began to heap the straw together for her in the further corner and to spread his coat for her.

"You will rest, cousin," he said, gently drawing her towards the bed he had prepared. "Meanwhile there is much that I would fain talk over with my father."

And stooping to kiss her hand, with a reverence

which went straight to the heart Henry Brownrigg had outraged, he turned away.

As for Audrey, with her face turned to the wall and her cousin's coat wrapped about her, she for the first time broke down utterly, and, lying there in the semi-darkness, wept till she could weep no more.

The two men sat at the further end of the cell deep in conversation.

"Many a time in London," said John Radcliffe, "I was minded to own you, for, from the first day I met you at Whitehall, I liked you, Michael. But then there was the accursed difference in our religion and our politics. I did my utmost to bring you round to the true Church and to make a Jacobite of you, but it was of no use. Then, too, you were thirsting for revenge and were doing your utmost to find out your unknown father; I thought there would be difficulties and put off the confession, but I always intended to acknowledge you sooner or later."

"Why did you desert my mother?" asked Michael, his eyes lighting up angrily.

"I never did desert her," said John Radcliffe. "You might justly reproach me with having abandoned you to your fate, but your mother I never did desert."

"They told me at Watendlath that you left her in the time of her greatest need."

"Nothing of the sort," said John Radcliffe. "I was

obliged to go on to Lord's Island, and it was impossible to take her with me, since no one knew of the marriage. We had come over from Patterdale, where I had been to look after the Goldrill estate for Sir Nicholas. Knowing that Watendlath was a quiet place where I could safely leave her, I rode on to Derwentwater, and not long after my arrival my nephew Marmaduke's posthumous child was born and proved to be a girl. Then I knew that I was next heir to the Goldrill estate. As soon as was possible I went with young Vane to Watendlath to ask how matters were with my wife. What happened you know. She was already dead. Had she lived, your life might have been very different. But she was gone, leaving me only a puny babe, whose existence bade fair to thwart all my plans."

"What plans?" said Michael.

"The lady I shortly afterwards married," said John Radcliffe, "had always coveted the Goldrill estate. I knew that she would accept my suit now that I was heir, but it was out of the question that I should confess my secret marriage with your mother and tell the Lady Isabella that no child of hers could inherit the estate. In order to make my marriage with this lady possible—she had great influence at court, and would, I thought, ensure my success in life—I made up my mind to drown you. But when it came to the point, and I was going to cast you into the Derwent, I couldn't do it. So

I just left you there on the bank, hoping that someone would take pity on you. 'Twas a dastardly thing to do, and Father Noel has for years tried to make me acknowledge you, but somehow the right time never came, and it grew harder as the years went on. I hope you won't bear malice."

There was a silence in the cell.

"Why don't you speak, Michael?" urged his father, trying in vain in the dim light to read his son's face. "I have gained nothing by all these schemes, and now, as likely as not, shall be sent to the gallows. Come, say you forgive me,"

But Michael thought of the horrible slur on his birth under which his whole life had been passed, and to forgive was hard. Nor was his father's easy-going, selfish nature one that called out the better side of those who had to do with him. In the dead silence of the lock-up there was no sound to be heard but Audrey's regular breathing, for at last she slept.

Presently she gave a little sob in her sleep, and Michael remembered how bitterly she had suffered that night. He turned back to his father.

"I forgive you, sir," he said quietly, "because to-night you acknowledged me in time to shield Audrey. I forgive you gladly, for you have baulked the Under-Sheriff."

"If only the maid could realise it, she is well quit

of that great, hectoring bully," said John Radcliffe. "By the powers! if you and I had not been bound he should not have escaped scot-free; we would have ducked him in the river and cooled his ribald tongue. We would have sent him spinning through the air after his lantern. Well, the marriage will never come off now, for it was the estate he hankered after, and that will be yours. By-the-bye, he will owe you a double grudge, and will doubtless do his best to keep you in gaol. But I scarcely think Audrey would have him after his conduct to-night, even if he did succeed in getting us both out of the world."

"He will hardly be able to manage that," said Michael.

"Not in your case, unless he distorts things very greatly. But I suspect 'twill be a hanging matter for me," said John Radcliffe coolly. "You must tell Father Noel that I have acknowledged you, and the best solution of the difficulty would be for you to wed Audrey."

The hot blood rushed to Michael's face.

"She does not care for me," he said in a low voice. "She loved the Under-Sheriff."

"Very possibly," said John Radcliffe. "That is to say she loved his fine person, and the pretty picture of the man's noble character which she drew in her own mind. That picture is gone now, and in its place there

remains only the grim reality of a low-minded, coarse, brutal tyrant, who taunted and insulted her. He has no one but himself to thank; he deliberately killed her love for him. Depend upon it, the time will come when she will learn to care for the fellow who kicked the lantern into the river."

And it was then that there flashed back into Michael's mind the words that Zinogle had spoken only a few hours before about hope.

When Audrey woke, the sun had long ago risen and she could hear voices in the little Market Square. She looked round in a bewildered way, puzzled for a moment not to see the wainscoted walls of her bedroom and the picture of her mother, generally the first thing upon which her eyes rested upon waking. Instead, the light was streaming through heavy iron bars, and at the other side of the room sat Uncle Radcliffe with his back against the wall and his mouth wide open, snoring loudly, while, stretched uneasily upon the flagstones, Michael lay, with his head pillowed on his arm, fast asleep.

Then it all came back to her again, and with a moan of pain she hid her face from the light. After all she had endured the last few days, all the anxiety and suspense, the misery of a divided duty, here was her great-uncle in prison and in danger of his life, while her own life had been utterly wrecked, and the lover she

had fondly deemed a tower of strength had proved a mere broken reed. Thinking over it all, she remembered now his strange manner to Michael when, in the previous autumn, he had found them looking together at Lucy Carleton's book. She remembered, too, how a faint misgiving had stirred in her mind when he came to Lord's Island a week ago and asked if they had visitors. It was only too clear now that she and her mother had been utterly deceived in him, and that the men, who one and all seemed to disapprove of the proposed marriage, had been right. Well, he had gone for ever out of her life—the man to whom she had for more than a year been betrothed might be said never to have had any real existence. It was there that the sting lay.

Suddenly she remembered that Greenhow would be returning ere long to attend to his prisoners, and she started up and stole across to rouse her uncle.

"Let me bind your arms, sir," she said, "before Greenhow comes, or you may get into trouble."

"True," said John Radcliffe, yawning and rubbing his eyes as he stood up. "I see my son sleeps still. Hark you, Audrey, I am sorry enough to have exposed you to so much suffering and insult at the hands of Mr. Brownrigg, but believe me, niece, you will one day thank me for opening your eyes. It may be that I shall not see you again alone; the feeling in the country is sure to run very strongly for a time against all Jacobites,

and I don't expect to cheat the gallows. Later on, when you have had time to recover the shock of last night, try to remember that my son has loved you all his life. I have dealt hardly by him, God knows! Try to do what you may to make the rest of his life more endurable."

Audrey drooped her head, and her eyes swam with tears.

"Alas!" she said, "but that is not in my power, sir. I think my heart is dead."

Nothing more could be said by John Radcliffe, for Michael just then began to stir, and indeed it was well that he woke, for he had scarcely donned his coat and allowed Audrey to bind his arms again when Greenhow appeared. The fellow brought them bread and another pitcher of water, and told them that he had orders to take them in a couple of hours' time to the house of Squire Williamson, the magistrate, at which news Audrey's cheeks began to burn and tingle. Turning aside, she made the best preparations she could for feeding her fellow-prisoners, while her great-uncle, with that curious ability to take all things in the lightest fashion, did his utmost to make the meal a merry one. His companions were in prison solely through his fault, but this never seemed to distress him; on the contrary, with the perception of the desperate plight they were all in, his spirits actually rose, and, with death staring him

in the face, he was more than ever determined to extract the last grain of enjoyment from life.

Michael partly understood how it was with him, and could not but admire his courage, but, as a matter of fact, the examination before the magistrate did not appear in the least formidable to a man of the world and a stranger, while to Michael and Audrey it meant the adverse criticism and the merciless gaze of the people they had known from their childhood. When Greenhow came for them Audrey's face was of a marble whiteness.

"Courage, little Joan of Arc," said John Radcliffe. "I'll warrant you are tenfold more brave and pure than those who will cry shame on you."

So they walked out of the cell and left the quaint, wooden Town Hall and stepped out into the little Market Square, where quite a crowd of people were awaiting them, since Keswick and the neighbourhood had been greatly excited by the news of the arrest. For himself, Michael could have faced the ordeal calmly enough, but thinking of Audrey his face flushed and his eyes grew bright. Alas! bound as he was, he could do nothing save walk by her side. At her right hand were John Radcliffe and the constable, while Birkett kept to Michael's left, elbowing a way for them through the gaping crowd. He could only hope that she did not hear the comments of the people. Yet he feared she

did, for her head drooped lower, so that her sunny curls half-veiled her face, and once he was sure that her steps faltered.

But suddenly her whole bearing changed, for, with a fierce cry of "Death to the Papist!" a burly fellow flung a handful of mud right into John Radcliffe's face, and stones would have followed had not the constable sternly called the man to order.

Then Audrey, who a moment before had been like one crushed beneath an intolerable burden, seemed all at once to gain new life. She stopped the little procession, Greenhow not venturing to object, and there, before all the people, she drew out her handkerchief and wiped the mud from her uncle's face. The man who had flung it slunk away ashamed, and the crowd watched in absolute silence, nor did Michael hear another word of abuse all the way to Squire Williamson's house.

They were taken into the hall, where, early though it was, quite a number of people had gathered. The Under-Sheriff was there and the other men who had been present at the time of the arrest, and Mrs. Brownrigg, very stiff and stately, with a grim expression about her mouth and a stony stare for the girl who was to have been her daughter-in-law. There, too, was Nathaniel Radcliffe with his calm face and gentle eyes, besides many others of the gentry of the neighbour-

hood, Williamsons and Huttons, distant Radcliffe kinsfolk, Fletchers from Wythop, and Le Flemings from Monkshall.

Someone offered Audrey a chair, but she declined it, choosing to stand with her uncle and Michael at the table before which Squire Williamson sat with papers and an inkhorn in front of him. All three prisoners pleaded guilty: John Radcliffe to a charge of conspiring to bring about the return of King James, and Michael and Audrey to the charge of endeavouring to aid the escape of John Radcliffe, knowing that a warrant was out for his arrest. The Jacobite's case was quickly disposed of; there was no possible choice but to commit him for trial, and Squire Williamson gave orders that he should be conveyed to Cockermouth on the following Monday.

He next turned to Michael.

"I am sorry you are mixed up in an affair of this sort, Mr. Derwent," he remarked, not unkindly. "It is an ill beginning, and one that will little please your patron, Sir Wilfrid Lawson."

"Sir," said Michael, "my life has been curiously changed by Mr. John Radcliffe's visit to the north. It seems that I also am a Radcliffe—his son by his first marriage."

Now, Henry Brownrigg had not seen fit to make this public as yet, and had bidden his men to hold their tongues, so that when the Borrowdale foundling

quietly announced his parentage there was much excitement in the hall.

John Radcliffe scanned the faces of the people carefully, then turned to Squire Williamson.

"It is perfectly true, sir, and the matter was owned by me many years ago to Father Noel in confession. He has long urged me to acknowledge my son, but, on my return from France, finding him to be a Protestant and an Orangite, I put it off, and Father Noel could not speak as he knew the matter only under the seal of the confessional. I think you will admit, Squire, that it is not a great crime for a son to aid his father's escape."

But at this Michael started forward.

"Sir, let us keep to the truth," he said, colouring. "I did not do it for your sake, but solely to help the kinsman of Sir Nicholas and Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. They have been good to me all my life."

There was something frank and spontaneous in this speech that appealed to those present; moreover, John Radcliffe's confession that he would have owned his son before had he not been a Protestant and an anti-Jacobite evoked a good deal of feeling in Michael's favour.

"When did you know that Mr. John Radcliffe was in the neighbourhood?" asked Squire Williamson.

"The night before last, sir," said Michael, "when, as I was out catching moths for a collection now being

made by Sir William Denham of the Royal Society and Dr. Martin Lister, I happened to catch sight of the Borrowdale Bogle, and, wishing to learn what the phantom really was, stood my ground and laid hold upon it. I then discovered that it was Mistress Radcliffe carrying food to her great-uncle, who lay hidden in the woods. It was impossible to let her go alone all that way in the dead of night, knowing, as I did, that the Under-Sheriff's men were at no great distance. I went with her and saw her home to Lord's Island, and it was arranged that the next evening I should provide a boat, in which Mr. Radcliffe might escape to the further end of Bassenthwaite and thence go across country to the sea-coast, for he gave us his word that he would quit England and weave no more plots. How the Under-Sheriff dogged my steps and kept watch for us on the banks of the Derwent you have heard from his own lips. I have nothing more to say, sir."

"I am sorry it falls to my lot to commit you for trial," said Squire Williamson, "but I'll not send you to Cockermouth prison if you are prepared to offer bail."

Then the old Quaker stepped forward and offered to find the necessary money.

"Long ago, when he was but a little lad, Michael Derwent did me a service when I was haled to Cockermouth gaol," he said, in his mild, quiet voice. "'Tis a

happiness to me to claim him as my kinsman and to offer him what help I may."

There now only remained Audrey's case to be disposed of, and Squire Williamson looked uneasily across the table at the slight figure in its cavalier dress, and at the pale, suffering, yet dignified face of the girl. He was a kind-hearted man with daughters of his own, and he remembered how only a few months before he had seen Audrey standing with something of the same look beside the open vault in Crosthwaite Church, into which her mother's coffin had just been lowered. It was a strange thing in those days for a woman to attend a funeral, but Audrey had been present because she was the only near relative belonging to the Church of England, and all the spectators had been forced to realise how desolate the girl's position would be, left alone with those whose views were opposed to her own. They had said then that it was well she was betrothed to Henry Brownrigg, but that betrothal was now at an end, for the Under-Sheriff had said so and indeed people thought he was well out of the affair now that the maid had ventured to play so dangerous a part. Still the squire could not feel harshly towards her.

"Tell me, Mistress Audrey," he said, "was it of your own choice that you learnt of your great-uncle's arrival?"

"No, sir," she said, in a low, clear voice, "we none of us had any choice in the matter. He just came into

the room where I was sitting with my grandfather and Mr. Noel late one evening and told us that he had fled from London because he had been involved in a plot against their Majesties. He pleaded for shelter, and since it seemed impossible to have him in the house so often visited by Mr. Brownrigg, it was thought best that he should shelter among the fells. I was the only able-bodied one in the house and went with him to show him a hiding-place, and again on the Wednesday night I went to take him more food. The rest you know from my cousin's account."

"Yet you are still faithful to the Church of England and a loyal subject of King William and Queen Mary?"

"Yes, sir," said Audrey. "I saw nothing against my duty towards church or state in carrying bread and meat to my kinsman, or in steering the boat last night when we hoped he would have been able to quit the country."

"Lady Alice Lisle was burnt for a similar offence by King James," said the squire, "but, thank God, since our peaceful revolution times are changed and Parliament has reversed this cruel sentence. Since you assure me, Mistress Radcliffe, that you only did this carrying of food and this aiding and abetting the escape of your great-uncle out of the natural affection of a niece, I shall discharge you, and consider that you have already suf-

fered enough and paid the penalty of what we can only call a rash deed."

The old magistrate had certainly the sympathy of almost all present, and Audrey received many kindly words when, after taking leave of her uncle, Nathaniel Radcliffe escorted her to the door. But, to tell the truth, she was too much dazed to heed them, and was chiefly conscious of Henry's air of studied indifference and of his mother's shrewish words:—

"For my part, I think you have fared far better than you deserve, Mistress Radcliffe," she said, with a chilling farewell curtsy. "My only satisfaction is in feeling that we learnt in time how much we had been mistaken in you."

Audrey's head drooped low, and burning tears rushed to her eyes; she clung closer to the old Quaker's arm, and wondered what made him glance back with anxiety in his face to the spot where Henry Brownrigg and Michael stood exchanging a few last words.

"Your messenger will find me at the *Royal Oak*," she heard Henry say. But, worn out and utterly exhausted by all she had gone through, it never occurred to her to think that the words referred to the challenge of the previous night.

CHAPTER VIII.

“Catch not at quarrels. He that dares not speak
Plainly and home is coward of the two.
Think not thy fame at every twitch will break.
By great deeds show that thou canst little do;
And do them not; that shall thy wisdom be,
And change thy temperance into bravery.”

GEORGE HERBERT.

NATHANIEL RADCLIFFE, though he had not heard the challenge given on the banks of the Derwent, instantly guessed that a duel between the Under-Sheriff and his rival must be imminent. The idea that he had himself procured Michael's release on bail, and that the young man was now going out in hot blood to fight his enemy, disturbed the Quaker not a little. He knew well enough that his young kinsman was in no humour to brook interference, nor did he venture to question him, but went home in some perplexity after seeing Audrey as far as Stable Hills Farm. All that day he waited for what he called “a leading,” but nothing came, and at length the old man went to bed and slept soundly, tired with his disturbed night and the unexpected events of the day. He woke very early and went, as his custom was, into the little room over the porch to pray and

meditate. Moving after awhile to open his casement and let in the fresh morning air, he was startled to see passing along the road just below the window no less a person than the Under-Sheriff, and with him young Fletcher of Wythop. "There is mischief afoot," he thought, and going downstairs he put on his three-cornered hat and followed the two men, whose appearance at such an early hour evidently boded no good.

But the Quaker was old and infirm and the young men were walking quickly. To overtake them was impossible; he could only hurry on, taking care not to lose sight of them. Presently they turned into a field on the left, and Nathaniel Radcliffe, toiling after them, was quite prepared for the sight that greeted him. The Under-Sheriff was throwing off his coat and waistcoat; Michael, already in his shirt-sleeves, was examining his rapier, and the seconds—young Fletcher of Wythop, and a son of Squire Williamson's, who had been at the High School with Michael—were measuring out the ground.

There was a general exclamation when they became aware that the Quaker was approaching them. Duelling, though constantly practised, had long been against the law, and Nathaniel Radcliffe, who disapproved of fighting altogether, and if struck on the face would have turned the other cheek, had evidently come to enter a protest.

"Friend," he said quietly, "more than once before I

persuaded thee against fighting; listen to me now, and do not stain thy soul with this crime. Who is the challenger?"

"I am the challenger," said Michael hotly, "and this time, sir, it is needful that we fight."

"What is the quarrel?" said the Quaker.

"The Under-Sheriff has brutally and wantonly insulted our kinswoman, Audrey Radcliffe."

"And once before, friend, he slandered thy mother; thou wouldst fain have fought him then, and like enough if thou hadst done so thy mother's name would never have been freed from blame as yesterday was the case."

"Sir," said Michael, chafing terribly at the interruption, "it is an affair of honour. I must fight. For our cousin's sake I am bound to fight Mr. Brownrigg."

"It will not profit Audrey Radcliffe that thou, for her sake, dost break Christ's command. The day is not so far off as men dream when duelling and war will be looked on as brutalities of a bygone time, when the beast in man was scarce tamed."

"But that time has not yet come," pleaded Michael, "and now to cry off would be accounted dishonourable."

"Who would account it dishonourable?"

"Why, all the world," said Michael, keenly sensitive to the derisive air with which the Under-Sheriff was regarding them.

"The world!" said the Quaker, a flicker of amusement passing over his peaceful face. "Oh, that may very well be. But thou hast promised to renounce the world. Art so little of a gentleman as to break thy word to the King of Kings because, forsooth, an Under-Sheriff hath offended thee and thy kinswoman?"

Michael bit his lip. It was clearly impossible to argue with a man who took this position. He wondered if Nathaniel Radcliffe in the least understood with what a desperate desire he longed to fight his foe. Merely to look at Henry Brownrigg's sneering face made the blood tingle in his veins, and stirred in him that craving to fight which seems born in every human being.

"Friend," said the Quaker, "there is fighting enough before thee, but 'tis of a nobler sort than can be carried on with such a weapon as this. Is John Williamson thy second? Then let him talk with Henry Brownrigg's second and say that thou desirest to withdraw from the contest."

The Quaker's absolute sincerity always had a curious influence over Michael. It seemed to lift him up into a purer atmosphere, and now, as they stood in the field over which the glow of the sunrise was just beginning to spread, his anger died down. Nicholas Radcliffe was surely right; what would it profit Audrey that the grass and daisies should be dyed with the blood of the man

who had jilted her, or of the man who had loved her in vain?

The seconds came to terms, and Henry Brownrigg was reluctantly forced to relinquish the idea of the duel.

"If Mistress Radcliffe's cousin finds that his courage fails at the sight of cold steel, I am ready to forego the fight," he said sarcastically. "Of course it is his concern; if he has no objection to being considered a coward, and has no longer any desire to call me to account for the words I used the other night, I certainly am the last man to object."

The blood rushed to Michael's face; a storm of passionate indignation shook his whole frame. But, by a supreme effort, he held his peace.

The Quaker understood how great a struggle he was passing through and, grasping his arm, drew him quietly from the field, saying, in his calm way, as he passed the Under-Sheriff:—

"It is a very small thing that he should be judged of you, or of man's judgment."

And, though Henry Brownrigg sneered at this and muttered something about the devil quoting Scripture for his purpose, he turned away with a discomfited air and an uneasy consciousness that the Quaker had had the best of it.

"The canting old hypocrite has got some extraordinary hold over Michael Derwent," he reflected, "but I'll

catch my man some day without his angel in drab clothing, and methinks he'll fight fast enough then. I shall not rest in peace till I've run him through the body."

Michael breakfasted at Hye Hill and then rowed back to St. Herbert's Isle to get through the day's work with his pupils and to comfort himself by writing a long letter to Mistress Mary Denham. Late in the afternoon he rowed across to Lord's Island to inquire after his kinsfolk and to carry his father's message to the old priest.

Father Noel greeted him very warmly and listened eagerly to his account of all that had passed.

"Your father has very little chance of his life," he said, with a sigh. "The feeling in the country against the Jacobites is most bitter, and we hear that the French are still masters of the Channel and are ready to devastate the towns on the south coast. I would give much to be able to see Mr. Radcliffe, both as friend and priest, but you must tell him how matters are with me. Is he in low spirits?"

"No," said Michael, "but full of gaiety, though I know he expects nothing but death."

"He is a brave man," said the priest, "but utterly reckless and unfit to die. Tell him as soon as I can move I shall visit him at Cockermouth. The trial will not come off yet awhile and I trust we may meet. Do you see him to-day?"

"Yes, I thought of seeing him this evening," said Michael, "and no doubt Sir Nicholas will send him such things as he will need to take with him on Monday when they move him to the gaol at Cockermouth."

"To be sure," said the priest. "By-the-bye, you had best see Sir Nicholas now for he talks much of you. He is rejoiced that the Brownrigg marriage will never take place, but nevertheless frets sadly over Audrey's suffering."

"Can I see her?" asked Michael.

The priest hesitated. His active, scheming mind was already busy with the future, and he had that very day indited a private letter to Mr. Salkeld, greatly hoping that he might now renew his suit.

"I don't advise your seeing her," he said kindly. "She tries to go about as usual, but 'tis easy to see what a strain it is upon her. No doubt you will meet to-morrow, unless indeed she cannot face the ordeal of going to service at Crosthwaite and being stared at by the people. Well, you will see Sir Nicholas, so farewell, my boy. I am heartily glad that your rights have at last been acknowledged."

And this was true enough, for Father Noel had the kindest of hearts. Yet, nevertheless, he saw that a great chance offered itself to him of drawing Audrey over to his own church, and his mind began increasingly to dwell upon it. With Protestantism represented by the

Under-Sheriff, who had treated her so brutally, surely it would be easy enough to attract her a little later on, when the first sharpness of her grief was over, by such a genial and courteous Catholic as Mr. Salkeld. As for poor Michael, she had never cared for him, and he must console himself with the Goldrill estate. Doubtless, when once she was safely married and had changed her faith, he would get over his hopeless passion and would marry someone else.

“The boy has withstood all Father Sharp’s arguments, and we shall never win him as a convert,” reflected the priest regretfully. “But Audrey’s mind is more versatile, more ready to change; with care and patience we ought to win her over.”

CHAPTER XI.

“O farewell griefe, and welcome joye,
Ten thousand times therefore;
For now I have founde mine owne true love,
Whom I thought I should never see more.”

OLD BALLAD.

“LORD love us!” cried Zinogle, throwing himself back in his chair and laughing till the tears rolled down his face. “To think that the parish clerk refused to be godfather to ye long ago, and that I, the Dutch fiddler as they call me, am godfather to the heir of Goldrill estate! Ah! my boy, ’tis the whirligig of time that brings in his revenges!”

Michael had been telling all that had passed to the old fiddler, and perhaps Zinogle’s intense delight in hearing his news gave him as much pleasure as he had yet received; for, naturally enough, Sir Nicholas, though kind and courteous, had been more than a little pained to think of the shabby way in which his brother had behaved in the past, nor did he like to think that his beloved granddaughter would never succeed to the property, and would be left a dowerless maid at his death.

Sir Nicholas had a mind which moved very slowly

and did not readily adapt itself to new circumstances. Grieved as he was to think of the way in which Michael had been wronged, he could not all at once feel him to be of his own blood, and Michael, who was over-sensitive and had a fatal facility in reading people's thoughts, knew perfectly well that the news which had so changed his whole position came as a blow to the old man on Lord's Island.

"There's a fate against me, Snoggles," he said, and though there was a smile on his lips his eyes were all the time sad. "I am doomed to be lonely. I have found my father, but he's on the way to the gallows. I have found my kinsfolk, but they can scarce accord me a welcome, since my advent means their future poverty."

Zinogle did not reply, but taking up his fiddle, played a grand old chorale which, by its strong confidence, its satisfying simplicity, fairly drove out Michael's despondent thoughts.

"What is that?" he asked eagerly.

"'Tis Johann Crüger's *Nun Danket alle Gott*," said the fiddler. "Keep up your heart, lad; things are working out far better than you expected when last you sat here; and I own 'tis nuts to me to see you checkmate the Under-Sheriff."

"I am not so sure that we have done with the Under-

Sheriff now," said Michael thoughtfully. "He is a man who takes a good deal of beating."

Taking leave of the old fiddler, he crossed the Market Square to the Town Hall and asked Greenhow to admit him to the lock-up to speak with his father. It was about eight o'clock in the evening and the constable grumbled a little, for he wanted to get home to his supper.

"'Twill not be so easy to see him at Cockermouth," said Michael persuasively. "Come, let me have half an hour's chat with him, Greenhow, and in the meantime go and drink my health as Michael Radcliffe at the *Woolpack*."

Greenhow, mollified by the silver coin which found its way into his hand, proceeded to unlock the door of the cell, and, with a muttered remark that he would be back in half an hour's time, he left the father and son together and trudged off well content to the inn.

John Radcliffe was supping as comfortably as was possible in such a barely furnished place. He had been allowed to send out for food and seemed in excellent spirits.

"I made sure I should have had Father Noel descending upon me," he said with a laugh. "'Tis just as well that he is tied by the leg, for to be lectured by him while in the lock-up would be intolerable. Tell

him I'll see him when it's time to make my shrift before being hung, but not till then."

"He would have been here could he have moved," said Michael, delivering his old tutor's message.

"To be sure, worthy man, but, all the same, I'd liefer see you, my son. Come, try this sack, I have tasted worse. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die' is one of your Bible maxims, is it not?"

"Why do you take so dark a view, sir? It may be only a matter of imprisonment," said Michael, shivering a little at the incongruous thought of death and anything so full of life as the high-spirited, cheery personality of his father.

"Oh, I'll do my best to cheat the gallows," said John Radcliffe with a laugh, "but at present I am not hopeful. That Under-Sheriff will certainly do his utmost to put me out of the way, and as yet I can think of no means of escape. Tell me what you know of Cockermouth. What chance should I have of breaking out of gaol there?"

"What! you mean escape by stratagem?" said Michael. "I was thinking that you might put faith in the well-known tolerance of King William."

"Pshaw! I'll not be dependent on the Oranger's favour. Besides, curse him! he is a prince, and 'Put not your trust in princes' hath ever been a sound axiom.

No, I put faith in my own sharp brains and in the slow wits of other folk."

"If you mean to try another escape of that sort, why, it had best be done here," said Michael thoughtfully. Then, a sudden light breaking over his face, he continued breathlessly: "Why, sir! if you will risk a second attempt we might carry it out to-night. We are of the same height and build; our voices are of the same pitch—nay, Audrey says they are precisely alike. If you change clothes with me, give me your light peruke and don my brown one, no one would note the difference of our features in the gloaming."

John Radcliffe laughed and rubbed his hands with an almost boyish delight at the suggestion.

"I' faith 'tis excellent!" he cried. "We'll fool the Under-Sheriff yet. But, boy, it would bring you into trouble; 'tis scarce fair for me to take advantage of your proposal."

"It will but be a repetition of my offence, sir. Already I have to stand my trial for aiding and abetting your escape. This could make but little difference."

And, without more ado, Michael began to take off his coat, while his father eagerly discussed the best way in which to get across country to the sea-coast. Fortunately, he still had with him the money which Audrey had given him in the Happy Valley on the Thursday

night, so that once out of Keswick he was likely to prosper well enough.

"There is the clock in Sir Joseph Banks' house chiming half-past eight," said Michael; "Greenhow will be coming back. Are you ready, sir?"

"Ay, to be sure," said John Radcliffe; "whole decades have rolled off my shoulders on to yours. Come, my worthy father! Try your best to look like a Jacobite conspirator and a man that has knocked about this wicked world for half a century. How fine a spirit Audrey showed when she wiped off the mud that bigot threw in my face! 'Tis rank heresy to say so, but I somehow fancy you and Audrey, for all your sturdy Protestantism, stand a better chance of escaping hell than I do; but not a word of that to Father Noel," he added, with a smile.

It was not till afterwards that Michael recalled this speech; his mind was far too much taken up with the difficulties of the present to have any room for thoughts of the hereafter.

"I hear Greenhow's steps," he said eagerly. "Farewell, sir, and may we succeed better this time."

John Radcliffe put both hands on his son's shoulders and looked searchingly into his eyes. For the first time in his selfish, reckless life a faint flicker of genuine love lit up his heart.

"We shall scarce meet again," he said, with a sigh,

“and I’m half-ashamed to leave you to bear the brunt of things here. Yet, perhaps Sir Wilfrid Lawson will again befriend you.”

“Yes, yes,” said Michael hastily. “You must go, sir, and here is Greenhow at the very door.”

“Then farewell,” said John Radcliffe, as the constable entered. “We must not keep Greenhow any longer from his bed.”

With a hurried embrace and a grip of the hand, he turned away, pulled his hat low over his eyes and walked out of the cell, while Michael flung himself carelessly down upon the straw, secure that Greenhow would notice nothing in the gloom.

The Market Square seemed deserted, and John Radcliffe walked steadily on, his heart beating high with hope and a smile flickering about his lips as he caught the sounds of *Kinmont Willie* from the open doorway of the *Woolpack*. The noisy chorus of:—

Wi’ the stroke of a sword instead of a file,
They ransom’d Willie in auld Carlisle,

followed him far in the quiet night.

He had crossed the bridge over the Greta, and had passed Hye Hill, when sounds of a galloping horse behind him filled him with panic. To seek a hiding-place was out of the question; he could only walk quietly on, hoping that the dusk would protect him.

The horseman dashed past, then suddenly reined in

his steed and confronted him. To his horror he saw that it was the Under-Sheriff, his handsome face flushed with wine, his eyes bright with anger.

"You coward! you poltroon!" he shouted. "This is the very chance I have been longing for. Your Quaker kinsman shall not step betwixt us again. You challenged me and, by heaven! you shall not back out of it. Come! No need of seconds! We'll fight now by the Derwent."

John Radcliffe hesitated. He saw that the Under-Sheriff had been drinking heavily; perhaps, after all, the best way would be to humour him and to fight on Michael's behalf. It would surely be easy enough to give the fellow a slight wound, and then to go on his way.

"Come!" roared Henry Brownrigg, "none of your hypocritical delays. My blood's up, and fight me you shall, Mr. Michael Derwent Radcliffe, since that's your highly respectable name, you foundling beggar! you eater of the bread of charity!"

The colour rose to John Radcliffe's face; he began to realise a little what he had made his son suffer.

"I am ready!" he cried, flinging off Michael's coat and waistcoat, but taking care to retain the brown periwig.

Then, in the silence of the summer evening, the duel began.

But John Radcliffe had counted too much on his antagonist's drunkenness. The Under-Sheriff, though too far gone to penetrate the disguise, was an accomplished swordsman, and even now had the better of his adversary. Moreover, while John Radcliffe was thinking solely how he could slightly disable his foe, Henry Brownrigg was animated by an overmastering desire to kill a man he detested—a man who stood in his way and had thwarted and shamed him.

By this time the assembly at the *Woolpack* had broken up, and the combatants could hear two of the singers approaching them. They were shouting out the old song:—

Dacre's gone to the war, Willy,
Dacre's gone to the war.
Dacre's Lord has crossed the flood
And left us for the war.

Henry Brownrigg, wild at the thought of possible interruption, exerted all his strength to control his disordered faculties, and, just as the men from Keswick approached him, he triumphantly ran his foe through the body.

With a groan John Radcliffe fell to the ground, and the Under-Sheriff, sober enough now, bent over him.

“Michael!” he exclaimed, not without a faint feel-

ing of remorse in his heart, "can I do anything for you?"

The dying man half-raised himself, made an effort to speak, then with a gasp of agony sank back on the grass. The next moment Henry Brownrigg heard the death-rattle in his throat and knew that all was over.

"Eh! God ha' mercy on us! what has coom about?" exclaimed Matt Birkett and his companion, approaching. "Sure enoo 'tis the fight betwixt the Under-Sheriff and Mr. Derwent us heard un planning t'other night."

"My good fellow, you guess rightly enough," said Henry Brownrigg. "To my great regret, I have had the misfortune to kill Mr. Derwent Radcliffe. As you know, he was the challenger, and I had no choice but to fight him!"

He walked across to the place where his adversary's coat lay and drew from the pocket the silk handkerchief. His fingers happened to touch the embroidered corner, and, raising it to his eyes, he recognised Audrey's stitchery in the monogram M. D. The sight touched him. Perhaps, after all, she had merely cared for him as a foster-brother and old playmate, and, remembering how short a time Michael had had to enjoy the knowledge that he was, after all, no nameless foundling, but a Radcliffe, his heart softened a little.

"We will carry him down to the landing-place and row him across to Lord's Island," he said to the two men. "'Tis more fitting that he should be taken to his own kin."

"Ay," said Birkett. "Poor young gentleman! I'm main sorry to think he's gone, but, as you say, sir, the fight was of his ain seekin'."

So they covered the dead face with the handkerchief and threw the coat over the body and bore it to the nearest boat. Then the two men took the oars, and the Under-Sheriff steered for the island. Leaving the men in the boat, and bidding them not carry the body to the house till he had prepared the relatives, he strode up to the main entrance.

The door stood open and Audrey was just coming forward, bearing in her hands a plate full of scraps for Rollo, the watch-dog.

He expected her to blush and falter at sight of him, but she looked him quietly in the face with a composure that was most daunting.

Had he been a total stranger, she would, he felt, have shown more animation; as it was, she seemed to be aware of his presence, yet to have all at once become so entirely aloof from him that he found it most difficult to address her.

"Good-evening," he said, raising his hat. She coldly acknowledged the greeting.

"Do you wish to speak to my grandfather?" she asked, her great grey eyes meeting his with the calm indifference which tells of a dead heart.

"I scarcely know whether to ask for Sir Nicholas or not," said Henry Brownrigg. "The fact is, I'm the bearer of bad news."

"Then you had better speak to me," said Audrey quietly. "My grandfather is very far from well and has felt the shock of all these troubles terribly."

"You are aware," said the Under-Sheriff, "that Michael Derwent—I mean your cousin—challenged me the other night. We fought this evening in the fields betwixt the Greta and the Derwent, and, to my great regret, I have mortally wounded him."

Life and light came back to her eyes in a look of agony indescribable.

"Mortally!" she gasped. "You don't know that for certain!—oh, it can't be! it can't be! He was so young and strong!"

"It is, alas! only too true," said Henry Brownrigg, alarmed by the look on the girl's face.

"We may save him yet!" she cried. "Where is he? Oh, Henry, for God's sake take me to him!"

"You do not understand," he faltered, moved for the moment by her distress. "I am trying to prepare you. It is all over. He is dead!"

With a stifled moan she threw herself down on the

steps, hiding her face from the light and crying as if her heart would break. "He loved me," she sobbed. "He really loved me, though I never guessed it. Oh, fool! fool that I was! I chose your counterfeit love and thought it real, and never gave Michael aught but pain."

"My love for you was true," said Henry Brownrigg, and he meant what he said, for, according to his lights, he had loved this girl, though mercenary thoughts had stolen in to mar and spoil everything.

"Audrey," he went on more eagerly, "let us forgive and forget; I will overlook the part you played the other night, and do you also overlook all that has chanced since then. Later on our wedding, so many times postponed, shall at last take place, and we will bury the past in oblivion."

"No," she said, struggling to recover her self-command. "That can never, never be now. It has all been a dreadful mistake. Wedded, we should be miserable. Let us forgive each other, with God's help, and then each go on our way. Michael has died for me. How can I forget that? Ah, you don't understand, and I—I only see it now when it is too late, and I can do nothing for him."

The Under-Sheriff stood looking at her in deep perplexity. Was this the gentle, even-tempered girl he had been betrothed to, or was it the same dignified, passion-

less woman who had confronted him on his arrival? Truly women were strange beings. He had thought of them as pleasant dolls to toy with in idle moments, but his doll had suddenly developed into the most complex of all mysteries. Suddenly he remembered that there was one thing which always made the sex rise to the occasion. A call upon her practical, womanly help would probably restore Audrey's calmness.

"After all was over," he said, "I rowed here, because I thought, since he was a Radcliffe, you would wish that his body should be brought to Lord's Island."

"That was good of you," she said, in a more natural voice. "Which landing-place?"

"The western one. I thought we should not be seen there from the house. The men are waiting there with the body."

She caught her breath at that word and turned quickly towards the house, coming back in a minute or two with a lantern, for by this time the light had almost faded away.

The Under-Sheriff offered to carry it for her, but she shook her head and walked on swiftly in advance of him through the orchard and down to the sweet, wooded shore, where, not quite two years before, she had seen Michael spring out of his boat after that long absence at Cambridge. How vividly, and with what cruel pain, she recalled it all! His shy reverence of

manner, the new expression in his eyes which she had puzzled over, and his eager longing to find out the truth about his parentage. Alas! poor Mic! he knew all at last, but the knowledge had come too late. And he had died for love of her!

Her heart was anything but dead now. It was alive and awake and full of love for the man whose life she had wrecked so unconsciously.

And now they had reached the landing-stage, and Audrey, holding the lantern high, could clearly see the outline of her dead kinsman lying in the boat. At a word from the Under-Sheriff, Birkett and his companion lifted the body and bore it to the shore, swaying and staggering as they moved, in a way that made Audrey turn sick with horror. She gave the lantern to Henry Brownrigg and signed to the bearers to stop.

"Lay him down here," she said, and, as they obeyed, she lifted the handkerchief from the dead face. The Under-Sheriff drew nearer with the lantern, but he did not look at the man he had slain; he looked instead, with jealous eyes, at the girl who was to have been his wife. All at once he saw a change pass over her grief-stricken face—a look of astonishment—then, with a cry she started back and caught at his arm, as if for support.

"What is it? What is it?" she cried. "Am I going

mad, or does death so change faces? He looks like my Uncle Radcliffe."

The Under-Sheriff bent hastily forward and held the light close to the dead face; he pushed back the brown periwig, and saw that the short, light hair beneath it was streaked with grey, while, seen more clearly, the face was that of a well-preserved man of about fifty. He stood there, utterly dumbfounded.

"Whose, then, is this?" he asked at last, taking up the handkerchief and showing the initials to Audrey.

"'Tis Michael's," she said, without hesitation. "I worked them for him years ago while he was at Cambridge. The clothes are Michael's. Ah! don't you see how it must have been? Michael must have tried to save him by taking his place in the lock-up."

"The knave!" said Henry Brownrigg, furious to think how he had been cozened. "But he will find that such tricks are not to be played with impunity. This Jacobite father of his was ready enough, no doubt, to think that he would get the better of me and make his escape after."

"Was it, then, arranged that you and Michael should fight to-night?" asked Audrey, still trembling with the mingled excitement and relief of the strange discovery she had made.

"No; we were to have fought early this morning, when who should step in to mar everything but that

Quaker kinsman of yours from Hye Hill. With much ado he prevailed upon Michael not to fight, and when just now I saw him, as I thought, alone, and found him ready enough to let the affair take place there and then, 'twas only natural that I should wish to settle matters."

"Yes, 'twas natural enough," said Audrey. "Scarce anyone agrees with cousin Nathaniel Radcliffe as to fighting, and no one could blame you for what you have done. Still, I suppose, you will have to stand your trial."

"Unless I fly the country," said the Under-Sheriff musingly. "I must not linger here, in any case. You had best prepare Sir Nicholas for his brother's death, and tell him I greatly regret having been the unconscious instrument. I'll row back at once to Keswick, and the men can wait here and carry the body up to the house."

Like one in a dream, Audrey watched him spring into the boat and push off, then she reverently covered John Radcliffe's face and, telling the men to follow her, took up the lantern and led the way to the house.

So, after all, the Jacobite's escape had been frustrated! Uncle Radcliffe, with all his schemes and his light-hearted jests, had passed away, saving, by his death in this strange fashion, the son he had desired to

kill as an infant and had all his life so grievously wronged.

But Audrey's thoughts could not linger with death, for her heart had come to life once more and was throbbing joyfully with the consciousness that Michael—Michael, who had so loved her all these years—was still alive and well.

CHAPTER X.

“With what sharp checks I in myself am shent
When into Reason’s audit I do go.”

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

THE Under-Sheriff found his horse cropping the grass beneath the tree to which he had tied him up, and, mounting in haste, rode off in the direction of Millbeck Hall. Here he found only one sleepy serving-man waiting up for him, and, going quickly to his room, he sat down and wrote a letter to Squire Williamson, announcing to him the startling events of the night, and counselling that Michael should, for safety’s sake, be at once removed to Cockermouth prison there to await his trial. For himself, he said, there was nothing left but to flee the country for a time. Having directed and sealed this letter, he went up to his mother’s room, for he knew that he must be gone before a soul in Keswick was astir.

Mrs. Brownrigg listened in dismay to the tale of what had passed. “It was a thousand pities,” she said severely, “that Michael was not slain as you thought; his father would, anyhow, have come to the gallows, and then you would have been quit of both.”

The Under-Sheriff winced. His mother had a blunt way of putting into actual words what he preferred to keep hidden away in decent retirement as thoughts of the heart.

"I give out that I am fleeing the country," he said, "but, as a matter of fact, mother, I intend to go secretly to London, and there to work matters, I hope, to a more satisfactory issue. One thing is clear, if Michael is tried here in Cumberland, he will either get off scot-free or will have but a short term of imprisonment. That, as you guess, will not suit my plans at all. I shall wed Audrey Radcliffe yet and get the Goldrill estate, though she little thinks it. But Michael's trial must be removed to London, where, with a little management, I can give things a very different complexion. I shall go there to prepare matters now, and indeed there is ample time, for the Assizes are just over. I can safely leave him at Cockermouth till my plans are laid."

Mrs. Brownrigg sighed. Her son's enforced absence, and the idea of ultimately being obliged to accept Audrey as her daughter-in-law after all, tried her sorely.

"And what if you fail?" she said dubiously, as with thrifty fingers she counted out the gold pieces he would need for his expenses. "What if you fail, Hal?"

"I shall not fail, mother," said the Under-Sheriff confidently. "I have bungled the matter, thanks to the

twilight last evening, and, to own the truth, I should have found out the trick the Radcliffes had played easily enough had my head been clear. But Michael will not catch me tripping again. He has been daft enough to help his worthless father and to get himself into gaol, and in gaol he will stay far longer than he dreams." Then, having made his farewells to his mother and sister, and left orders that the letter to Squire Williamson should be delivered the first thing in the morning, the Under-Sheriff quitted Millbeck Hall, and by sunrise was well on his way to Penrith.

By the time Squire Williamson walked across the Market Square to see the prisoner in the lock-up, half Keswick had heard the strange news of the Jacobite's escape, and of the duel that had been fought on the previous evening. For had not William Hollins walked in from Stable Hills Farm to order Mr. John Radcliffe's coffin? And William was blessed with a real genius for giving a story in all its detail, so that half the town knew how at first it was supposed that the dead man was Michael Derwent, and how Mistress Audrey had wept over the death of her old playfellow, and of her amazement when she found the "corp," as William called it, to be that of her great-uncle."

Had Michael been awake, he would have wondered what could have caused so much talking in the Market Square on a Sunday morning, when, as a rule, the most

perfect quiet prevailed. But, having lain awake most of the night, wondering how matters would turn out, and whether his father would escape to the sea-coast, he now slept profoundly, and did not even hear the unlocking of the door when Greenhow ushered in Squire Williamson and a notary.

"That's never Michael Derwent," said Squire Williamson, looking across the cell to the figure stretched face downwards on the straw.

"Sir," said the notary, "the Under-Sheriff in his letter speaks of the extraordinary change made in the other by the different colour of the peruke and the change of dress."

As he spoke he crossed the cell and shook the sleeper by the shoulder. Michael instantly started up, and looked round in a bewildered way. Then, suddenly remembering all, and perceiving who his visitors were, he knew that concealment was no longer possible.

"I am here in my father's place, sir," he said, bowing to Squire Williamson.

"Sir," said the squire, "I am heartily sorry to find you here. I know you for a warm-hearted fellow, and can well believe that you did this rash act with a generous intent, but you will, I fear, have to pay a heavy penalty, and you have gained naught as far as your father is concerned,"

"He has been arrested, then?" said Michael, his face falling.

"Your father, sir, is dead," said the squire gravely.

Michael's face became colourless; a sick feeling of horror came over him, as he remembered how full of life and energy his father had been only a few hours before. It was hardly possible to believe the squire's words.

"How?" he asked breathlessly. "When?"

"It was last night, almost directly after he left this place," said Squire Williamson. "It seems that the Under-Sheriff, who was riding back to Millbeck Hall, passed him not far from Hye Hill. Mr. Brownrigg owns that he had been drinking, and what with that and the twilight, he never noticed the change, but mistook him for you. He reminded him that the duel which, I understand, had been stopped once by Mr. Nathaniel Radcliffe, could be fought then without interruption, and, your father consenting, they fought in the fields near the Derwent. It was not until Mr. Brownrigg had taken the body back to Lord's Island that he and Mistress Audrey discovered that it was not your corpse, but that of Mr. John Radcliffe."

"I might have known it to be a piece of Henry Brownrigg's work," said Michael bitterly. "Squire, you know well that all my life he has never lost a chance of thwarting and hurting me. Your son knows how it

used to be when we were lads together at school. And now—now when I have a right to bring him to justice—I am fast in gaol, and can't stir hand or foot to avenge my father."

"The Under-Sheriff has fled," said Squire Williamson. "And as for vengeance, I should leave that, if I were you, Michael. You cannot be allowed out again upon bail after deliberately aiding a Jacobite to escape a second time. You have made your bed, my poor fellow, and you will have to lie on it. I am sorry enough that it falls to me to order you to be sent at once to Cockermouth gaol, but I can't run the risk of keeping you any longer here in Keswick. I understand that William Hollins is in the town and, if you wish, he can row across to Herbert's Isle and get you such things as you mean to take with you."

Michael thanked the kindly old man, and begged to see William Hollins at once, for the escort was to take him to Cockermouth at noon. The talkative old farmer gave him a hearty greeting, and would have lingered telling him every detail that he had imparted to the people of Keswick, had not the constable remonstrated, and pointed out that the time left was short. So he hastened away, promising to row to both islands and to return with the things Michael would need.

"For noo that you be the heir we must treat ye as

such," he said; "and 'tis but fitting that your ain kith and kin should hear the last news o' ye. I'll be back afore lang, Bill Greenhow, and doan't ye go a-lettin' the escort carry Mr. Radcliffe to gaol till ye see me agin."

Left once more alone, Michael's thoughts returned to his father. Only a day or two before, in that very cell, he had felt that it was a hard thing to forgive the wrong that had been done him by his abandonment at birth. But now he was inclined only to remember the kindlier traits in his father's character, which, just at the last, he had been able to see. His life had certainly been reckless and selfish, but there was something in the idea of that silent fight in the fields between the Greta and the Derwent that appealed to Michael. If long ago his father had thought of drowning him, and had finally abandoned him higher up the Derwent, where it flowed through the wooded heights of Borrowdale, he had, at anyrate, died fighting in his stead further down the self-same river.

True to his word, William Hollins returned before noon bringing with him Michael's brown peruke, the clothes he would need during his imprisonment, and a sealed packet from Sir Nicholas Radcliffe. It contained a purse with twenty gold pieces and a kindly worded letter, which greatly pleased Michael.

DEAR NEPHEW,

Your kindly effort to save my brother hath endeared you to me. He has not treated you as a father and it was scarce to be expected that you could have a son's feeling towards him. That you should have a second time run so great a risk for him, though sharing neither his religious nor his political views, touches me more than I can well express. Use the enclosed during your imprisonment to furnish whatever comforts are permitted, and let me know when I can in any way serve you. Doubtless Sir Wilfrid Lawson will ride over from Isel to see you and hear all that has befallen, and I am confident that so just a man will see that your blame in the matter was but small. Allow me to sign myself

Your affectionate uncle,

NICHOLAS RADCLIFFE.

Slipped inside was a tiny, three-cornered note from Audrey, bearing only a few lines.

DEAR MIC,

I well-nigh broke my heart at hearing of your death last night. Thank God! I quickly found the news was false, and that you are alive and well. Have a care of yourself, and do not lose heart in gaol, and in any difficulty fail not to send word to thy kinswoman and old playmate,

AUDREY RADCLIFFE.

With the reading of those words a great hope rose in Michael's heart. After all, what did imprisonment matter if Audrey loved him, or might in time come to love him? Surely, surely, now that her love for the Under-Sheriff had been so rudely shattered, now that she found she had been in love with the baseless fragment of a dream, there was some chance that, as Zinogle

had said, the "Whirligig of time would bring in his revenges."

And now there came the sound of horse-hoofs without and Greenhow opened the door and began to bind his arms, though not so tightly as on the night of the arrest. While the process was going on, Zinogle, with his fiddle under his arm, boldly stepped in through the open doorway and, with a pacifying word to the constable, approached the prisoner.

"So thou art off to Cockermouth gaol, lad," he said. "I'm sorry to hear that, but it's just what the old landlord at Cockermouth prophesied when thou wert but a little chap. If you will go standing up for those that ye don't agree with, you'll ha'e mony a sair heid."

"It can't be helped, Zinogle," said Michael, with a smile. "Some of us are made that way. Besides, in this case it was for my own father. After all, 'blood is thicker than water'."

"It's wrong to speak against the dead," said the fiddler, "but I must say that Mr. John Radcliffe was a precious long time in finding out the truth of that proverb."

"Let the past alone," said Michael, with a catch in his voice. "He took my quarrel upon him and was slain in mistake for me."

"Oh, I'm not questioning his bravery," said Zinogle.

"As far as that goes, he was every inch a man; 'twas moral courage he lacked."

Michael made no reply, and the old fiddler, with a suspicious moisture about his eyes, watched him as he rode down the street with his escort.

"All the moral courage went instead to the son," he muttered, "and all the heart, too. If ever there was a selfish dog it was Mr. John Radcliffe, and we are not yet at the end of the mischief he's wrought. Well, I must e'en hurry my stumps to the kirk, and be in time to play my fiddle in the psalm after sermon or the vicar will be hauling me over the coals. Strange things have come about in this place since I fiddled last Sunday. 'Tis a topsy-turvy world!"

CHAPTER XI.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MICHAEL DERWENT.

(Written in Cockermouth Gaol).

“Sweet sun, when thou lookst on
Pray her regard my moan!
Sweet birds, when you sing to her
To yield some pity woo her.”

SIR EDWARD DYER.

So much has passed since I last wrote that it is not easy to set down all with ink and pen. In my hand I hold a small note in Audrey's writing, and cannot refrain from thinking what a slight thing it was to work so great a difference. For during the last week it has twice chanced that I had to submit to the ignominy of being bound, and, though the first time the humiliation seemed to me well-nigh intolerable, yet it is wonderful how circumstances alter cases. On that Sunday morning, with Audrey's little note in my breast-pocket, I felt quite indifferent to the cords with which Greenhow made my arms secure. Strange that half a dozen lines in a woman's handwriting can so affect a man's whole world! The words were vague enough, too, and pledged the writer to nothing; yet somehow the note had filled me

with hope, and, as I made my farewells, even dear old Zinogle's funnily pathetic face, with its smiling mouth and its wet eyes, could not send me on my way hither to gaol in anything but excellent spirits.

At Hye Hill, as we rode past, Nathaniel Radcliffe sat reading in the porch where, a few nights ago, Audrey had sunk down faint and exhausted. Greenhow allowed me to stop for a few minutes and speak with him, and he, knowing well what Cockermouth gaol was like, gave me a few practical hints, which I found useful enough when I got here. Moreover, as usual, the mere sight of his tranquil face did me good and seemed to lift me into a purer atmosphere.

But I am rambling on with my more recent recollections, when, as far as I can remember, the last entry I made in my book at Herbert's Isle recorded how, on the night of my mothing expedition, I encountered the Borrowdale Bogle, and stood by the beck with knees unsteady and heart thumping in my breast, while the spectre, with upraised and grisly hand, approached me.

Sitting now on a three-legged stool in a very ill-lighted cell in Cockermouth prison, I must try briefly to set down the outline of what has since happened, though my gaoler has procured me very indifferent writing materials at a most extortionate price, and, moreover, writing in gaol is not easy, for there seems a weight upon my pen, and my brain works slowly and my words

halt. More than ever do I now marvel at the wonderful book John Bunyan wrote in Bedford goal, but the tinker was one of a thousand and I am but an ordinary mortal, and my pen drags on wearily, while I endure the stifling heat of a July day in an evil-smelling room scarce large enough to swing a cat in. However, I have the place to myself, heaven be praised!

I had writ thus far when who should come to visit me but Sir Wilfrid Lawson. His jolly face looked graver than I had seen it for many a day, for the small-pox had given them much anxiety, though now, luckily, it has abated, and the stricken patients are getting about once more.

"Well, Michael," he said, "what is all this I hear of you? Sir Nicholas Radcliffe writes me that you are his nephew, and that the truth has just come to light."

"Ay, sir," I answered. "No one but my father knew the truth of things save Father Noel, and his tongue was tied because he had heard of the matter in confession."

"'Tis a strange story," said the baronet, "and pretty Mistress Audrey hath been mixed up in it, I hear, and hath been jilted in consequence by the Under-Sheriff."

"Yes, sir; she had naturally enough been taking food to her great-uncle when he was in hiding, and had in fact played the part of the Borrowdale Bogle the better to disguise herself. I chanced to come across her one

night and so learnt the whole truth, and it seemed to me impossible to let her wander about like that alone, when the Under-Sheriff had set spies to track the bogle."

"Ay, I see it all plainly enough," said Sir Wilfrid. "You went to protect the lady and cared little enough for the Jacobite traitor, John Radcliffe."

"That is very true, sir. How could I then care for him? As to his views, I hated them, but I saw no harm in helping him to quit the country and aiding the kinsman of those who had ever been my best friends."

The worthy baronet laughed.

"I told thee how it would be, lad, when thou wert but an imp of ten. An thou wilt champion everyone thou dost deem harshly dealt with, thou wilt not find this world a bed of roses. Bully Barton did his best to batter thy skull for befriending the Quaker long ago, and now Bully Brownrigg will assuredly do his best to ruin thee for defending a Jacobite."

"The Jacobite was my own father, sir," I said.

"Ay, to be sure; when did he own that? I should like to have been present to see the Under-Sheriff's face."

"He owned it, sir," I replied, "on the night of our arrest, as we stood on the banks of the Derwent. He owned it in excellent time to shield Mistress Audrey, when that vile Under-Sheriff would have set a scandal

on foot about her. I would you could have heard my father's voice as he stepped forward and said I was his son by his first marriage, and that it was surely the most natural thing in the world for Mistress Audrey to be protected by her cousin. That moment made up for all the years of dishonour. Had you been there, sir, you would understand how, after that, I could think of no differences of view, but only remember that he was my father and that he had sheltered Audrey from that brute's foul slander."

"Yes, yes, it was all very natural," said Sir Wilfrid, "but why need you a second time run your chivalrous head into the noose?"

"My father thought that, if brought to trial, he should not stand a chance of escaping the gallows, sir. He asked me as to Cockermouth prison and the chances of escape from it. Then it flashed into my mind that if he meant to escape we might contrive it far more easily from Keswick. Well, you have heard the rest: how he changed wigs and clothes with me and got away out of the town, where, unluckily, the Under-Sheriff overtook him and, mistaking him for me, induced him to fight and killed him. Have you any notion, sir, where Henry Brownrigg has fled? Squire Williamson only told me he had quitted the country."

"No one seems to know," said Sir Wilfrid; "and even were he brought to trial he would probably get off. I

shrewdly suspect that he is by this time in London trying to get evidence against you, lad. And I am uneasy about it, for Mr. Wharncliffe once told me he thought you were rash in mixing over-freely with suspected people. However, we will not go half-way to meet our troubles. But I fancy that now you are heir of Goldrill, Henry Brownrigg hates you more than ever, and we must be on our guard against him, for he is as crafty as a fox. The one bright spot in the matter is that pretty Audrey Radcliffe is no longer betrothed to him. Take my advice, lad, woo her and wed her before the Under-Sheriff returns to spoil sport."

"Would to heaven I could, sir, but that is not so easy in gaol," I said, looking round the hateful little cell with its heavily barred window.

"Oh, we will have you out of this before long," said Sir Wilfrid cheerfully. "Never fear, lad! And when you are free, why, remember the saying, 'Happy is the wooing that's not long adoring,'" and with that he left me to meditate on this congenial advice and to dream over a future which in its brightness contrasted strangely with the gloom of my prison cell.

It must have been towards the end of July that the news reached me in prison of how the French had invaded England, had burned Teignmouth to the ground, had killed the cattle, and desecrated the churches, destroying altars and pulpits, bibles and prayer-books, and

scattering the luckless people, who were quite without means of defence. However, such an insult roused all England. Everywhere troops of horse and foot were formed, while the Jacobites were execrated on every hand, and all loyal Englishmen were ready to cry "God save King William and Queen Mary."

I was personally delighted with the turn affairs had taken, yet, no doubt, my own prospects were rendered more gloomy by the hatred of the Jacobites, which increased in bitterness every day. Sir Wilfrid was fain to admit that this was the case, though he cheerfully reminded me that the Assizes were not coming off yet awhile, and that in a place where I was so well known people were not likely to credit me with anything worse than the rashness of youth.

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(Continued in London).

One night in August I was roused from sleep by the sudden glare of a lantern and, looking up, found my gaoler shaking me by the shoulder.

"What's amiss?" I asked sleepily.

"You must dress with all speed," said the fellow; "the governor will be here anon to speak with you."

Grumbling at the trouble of getting up at such an hour, I threw on my clothes and saw, much to my surprise, that the gaoler was thrusting all my possessions into a couple of saddle-bags.

"What are you about, Ned?" I asked.

"Obeying my orders, sir," he said grumpily, and not another word could I get from him.

In a few minutes steps sounded in the corridor and in walked the governor; a very civil man he was, and owing, I think, to his liking for Sir Wilfrid, he had treated me kindly enough. With him was a stout, red-faced officer, whose uniform was buttoned so tightly over his portly figure that it seemed as if at any moment the seams might split.

"This is the prisoner, Captain Plummer," said the governor. "Mr. Radcliffe, I have just received orders for your removal from Cockermouth to London, and Captain Plummer wishes to start at once."

He showed me the warrant he had received, and my heart sank, for I felt convinced that this was all planned by the Under-Sheriff.

"Do you mean, sir, that my trial is removed to London?" I asked, in some perplexity.

"I know nothing more than you see here in this letter of instructions," said the governor. "But I should think that would probably be the case. Very possibly, too, your evidence is wanted at once by the government."

At this I could not forbear laughing.

"The government will be bitterly disappointed if it expects to learn anything of importance from me," I

said. "Is it likely that any Jacobite would confide secrets to an admirer of King William and a Protestant?"

"Maybe not," said the governor, "but you are just discovered to be the son of a well-known Jacobite plotter, and you must take the consequences, sir."

This was true enough, but it was cold comfort, and, as I stood there while Ned fastened on the manacles which Captain Plummer had brought with him from London, a chill sense of dread began to steal over me. These new-fangled gyves allowed a little more freedom than was possible with arms tightly bound to one's sides, yet I somehow minded them more than the cords which Audrey had unloosed for me in the lock-up at Keswick. I longed indescribably to see her once more before going to the south! That of course was out of the question, but I vowed that I would leave no stone unturned and would somehow contrive to send her a message.

The governor of the gaol took leave of me kindly enough and said he would let Sir Wilfrid Lawson know of my removal; then, with the first grey light of dawn just streaking the eastern sky, we rode away from Cockermouth, Captain Plummer grumbling much at the ill road which made travelling by night no easy task.

After the close confinement of the last few weeks, it was pleasant enough to be on horseback again, even in

manacles, and, as we rode along the shore of Bas-senthwaite, my mind began to work busily with plans for reaching Audrey.

At length I saw the battlemented tower of St. Kentigern of Crosthwaite rising from the trees that stood about it, and soon my heart was beating high with hope, for there, in the rosy morning light, lay Derwent-water and its wooded islets, and beyond was my beloved Borrowdale with the mountains that had from the very first been such good friends to me. It was still very early and hardly any folk were astir in the little town. At Hye Hill they were evidently sleeping; at the *Royal Oak* they were only just beginning to show signs of life. We rode into the courtyard and found a drowsy ostler washing his face at the pump. Captain Plummer called for ale and bread and cheese, while the three men that formed our escort began to water the horses. I paced up and down the yard, somewhat stiff after the ride, and on the lookout for any serving-wench or stableman by whom I could send a message to Zinogle. At last, to my great satisfaction, I caught sight of the landlord's little son.

"Billy," I said, "don't you remember me?"

He lifted his twinkling blue eyes and looked at me for a moment.

"Yes, you are Mr. Derwent; leastways you was."

"I'll give you a groat, Billy, if you'll hurry off this minute and fetch here old Snoggles, the fiddler."

Billy darted off without a moment's delay; a groat was untold wealth to him. He returned in about ten minutes, dragging poor old Zinogle after him in triumph.

"The imp would scarce let me take off my nightcap," said the fiddler, "and my mind misgave me all the way here that he was but tricking me. In the name of all that's outlandish, how did you come here, lad?"

"They are taking me up to London, Zinogle," I said hurriedly, "though whether to the Gatehouse or the Tower, I don't yet know. But, depend upon it, this is the Under-Sheriff's doing, and I fear things will go hardly with me out of Cumberland. I promised Mistress Audrey to let her know if anything happened. So, an you love me, Zinogle, go post-haste to Lord's Island and tell her that Captain Plummer and his men are taking me to the south. Bid her farewell for me, and say——"

But there I hesitated. What was I to bid him say? How could I possibly put into words just what I longed to tell her? To have done it in any case would have been difficult, but to do it in cold blood by the lips of a messenger was out of the question. Yet how hard it seemed to be dragged away to a London gaol with

never a chance of letting her know all the truth! And, remembering how desperate a struggle I had had to keep silent during our walk to and from the hiding-place among the fells only a few weeks ago, I was the more chafed to find words so difficult to frame now that it lay in my power to send her a message.

“Well, lad,” said Zinogle, with a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth, “am I to tell Mistress Audrey all that I see writ in your face?”

“Yes,” I said. “Tell her what I can’t put into words, Zinogle. You have understood me all along, old friend. Make her understand the truth. Tell her how I wish that we might have had again the chance I dared not take in Ashness woods. Tell her that all I kept from saying then I long to tell her now, and see that you say this, Zinogle—that as to my being heir to Goldrill, that can make no change, since I will hold nothing that is not also hers.”

“I’ll do the best I can for ye, lad,” said the old man earnestly; “but in truth I’m flayte, as the dales-folk say. ’Tis a hard task you’ve set me. I’ll not linger noo, but be off to the island and have a crack with Mistress Audrey before the tone of your voice is out of my mind. Good luck go with you, lad, and may we soon have you back again in Keswick.”

I echoed that wish very heartily, and watched the

old fellow hurry out of the yard of the *Royal Oak* with envious eyes.

"Come, Mr. Radcliffe," said Captain Plummer, "you had best feed while you may; we shall lie at Appleby to-night and have a hot day's work before us."

I followed him into the inn, pausing, however, to give little Billy the groat he had earned, and bidding him tell Zinogle where we lay that night, if he should chance to see him again, for a wild hope seized me that perhaps Audrey might send me a message or a letter by the old fiddler, since in those days to send a letter by post was not a thing to be accomplished in our part of the world with ease, letters only being delivered in Cumberland once a week, and then always with risk of miscarriage. And all that hot summer day, as we travelled along the dusty high-road, I had a foolish feeling that Zinogle was following us, and whenever we paused to bait our horses I felt a pang of disappointment because he never appeared, as I had hoped, to join our cavalcade.

Then I cursed my folly for having sent such a message, for, after all, though I knew Audrey's love for the Under-Sheriff had been shattered, was it likely that she would so soon turn her thoughts towards one she had known all her life as friend and comrade? Alas! I had often heard that women seldom loved those they knew

best. It was far more likely that in a moment of depression and indifference she would yield to the wish of her grandfather and wed the son of Sir Francis Salkeld, who, I very well knew, had long been one of her servants.

CHAPTER XII.

“If every maid were of my mind
Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, lovely sweet;
They to their lovers should prove kind,
Kindness is for maidens meet.”

HENRY CONSTABLE.

It was still quite early in the morning when Zinogle landed on Lord's Island and walked up to the half-ruined mansion. The servants were astir, however, and Betty, the housemaid, with clogs on her feet and a big mop in her busy hands, was cleaning the paving-stones in the hall.

“Lawk-a-mercy-me, Snoggles! hoo ye do mak' a body start!” she exclaimed, as the fiddler mischievously stole up behind her and gripped the handle of the mop.

“A thousand pardons, lass, but I'm in sair haste,” said Zinogle, “and want speech with Mistress Audrey on a matter of great importance,”

“What! at this time o' day? Man, she be sleeping, and I'm not the one to waken her, for she be sair spent since a' the troubles coom aboot.”

“Nathless, Betty, lest worse troubles should come you had best go and rouse her. And here, as good luck will have it, the lady herself comes.”

He broke off, bowing low as Audrey hastily crossed the hall, her wistful grey eyes eagerly scanning his face. Evidently she had dressed with the utmost speed, and her hair hung loose and disordered all about her shoulders.

"I saw your boat, Zinogle," she exclaimed. "Is anything amiss? Have you brought news from Cocker-mouth?"

"If I can have speech wi' you for ten minutes, mistress, I will tell you all," said the fiddler. "I was sent here to you with a message."

"Come into the study; Sir Nicholas will not be down yet awhile," she said eagerly. "Is it good news or bad, Zinogle?"

The fiddler hesitated. He closed the door after them and sat down as she bade him on one of the old carved chairs.

"Mistress," he said, "it is like most things in this world, neither wholly good nor altogether bad, but mixed. I was roused early this morning by little Billy, son of the landlord at the *Royal Oak*, and he bade me hasten at once to the courtyard to speak with Mr. Michael Radcliffe. I found him there manacled, and on his way, in charge of Captain Plummer and his men, to London, though whether he was to be sent to the Gatehouse or to the Tower, he had not heard. Seeing clearly enough an enemy's hand in this sudden removal

from Cumberland, and having promised to let you know what befell him, he asked me to come to the island and tell you."

Audrey had turned deathly pale.

"When once they have him away from his own neighbourhood they may twist and distort what has passed easily enough!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Zinogle! if only I were a man and could travel there myself! What a miserable thing it is to be a weak woman, tied and bound by a thousand conventions, and unable to stir, however much one may long to help!"

"'Twould scarce mend matters were ye a man, mistress," said the old German fiddler, with a quiet smile.

"Was that all the message?" said Audrey. "Did he say no more but just that?"

"Yes, he said more," said Zinogle gravely, "and I would to God I could put it rightly to ye, dear lady. I've some skill with the fiddle, but none at all with carrying lovers' messages. I would I could mak' ye feel his words as I felt them."

"Lovers' messages, did you say, Zinogle?" she faltered.

"Ay, to be sure, Mistress Audrey. It's your lover he's been ever since he was a little lad in Borrowdale. Sure you understand that much! If you could but have seen his face just now 'twad have told you more than any bungling words of mine can ever do. Think of the

pity of it, dear mistress! For years he has loved you, and been forced to hold his tongue. Then, when seventeen months ago he heard of your betrothal to the Under-Sheriff, he looked like one that had got his death-blow. And now—now when hope had come once more into his life, they whirl him away to London without so much as a glimpse of you, or the chance of a single word. Mistress, 'tis not every day that such a love as that is laid at your feet. You'll be sayin', maybe, that 'tis over soon to think again of love and marriage, but for the lad's sake don't let pride and the thought of gossiping busybodies keep you silent, when silence means doubt and pain to him. And there were these words I mind me well that he said to me as we stood there just now. 'Tell her,' says he, 'hoo I wish I might have had again the chance I dared not take in Ashness woods. Tell her that all I kept from saying then I long to tell her now. And as to my being heir to Goldrill, that can make no change, since I will hold nothing that is not also hers.' "

The colour came and went in Audrey's face; her eyes were brimful of tears. When the old fiddler at length paused, she stole across the room to the open window—that very window through which John Radcliffe had climbed a few weeks ago, bringing by his advent so many changes into all their lives. She looked across the calm water to Skiddaw and Latrigg,

and she remembered how, on that night of the arrest, as they had rowed along, the summer lightning had revealed their well-known outlines, and how the sudden flash had revealed also that look of pain on Michael's face, that glance in his hazel eyes which had recalled to her the wounded stag in Borrowdale.

"He shall never have to bear one single pang that I can hinder," she thought to herself. And yet how was it to be contrived? How could she do much for a man who, even now, had not definitely asked her to wed him; nay, who had not been able, save in the vaguest way, and through a messenger, to declare his love? Ah! if only there were some woman to whom she could turn for advice, some friend who would understand how it was with both of them!

All at once she remembered how he had spoken to her of Mistress Mary Denham. She had heard, too, a little more of Mistress Denham's friendship with him from Sir Wilfrid Lawson, when, a fortnight ago, he had come over to call on them and to discuss the arrangements that would have to be made before Michael's trial took place. What was the tale he had told?—something about a lover or a friend that Mistress Denham contrived to rescue in the times of the Rye House plot, when he had been unjustly imprisoned in Newgate. A conviction that she could hardly have explained sprang

up in her mind, that this unknown Mary Denham was the one being in all the world to whom she could freely open her heart, the one woman who would assuredly understand and know how to advise and help her.

“Zinogle,” she said, turning to the old fiddler with wet eyes, but with a glow of hope in her face that did not escape his keen glance, “you are the best of messengers. Tell me, if I got you a horse and the money you would need by the way, could you act as my messenger? Could you go to London, take the letter I am about to write, and wait for the reply, doing besides any errand in London that the lady I am writing to may see fit to entrust you with?”

“Ay, mistress,” said Zinogle heartily, “I would go to the ends of the earth for you, and for him that loves you. And if I have a fresh horse, why, ’tis like enough I shall overtake Captain Plummer’s cavalcade on the way to Appleby, and might get leave to join them. ’Tis as well not to travel alone on the North road.”

“Then go and bid Betty prepare you some breakfast, and tell Duncan to row across to the farm and order the groom to put his saddle on Firefly in an hour’s time. Firefly is my own mare, so I have a right to do what I please with her.”

The old fiddler withdrew, and Audrey took writing materials from a desk on the table, and sat, pen in hand, vainly trying to put into words all that filled her

heart. It seemed an impossible task that she had attempted, and one phrase after another was dismissed as too stiff or too free, till at length, in despair, she found that time was slipping away and that her sheet was still almost a blank. Then, throwing aside all conventionalities, she wrote off rapidly the following lines:—

DEAR MADAM,

You were, I know, a good friend to Michael when he was in London, and he spoke so warmly to me of all that you had done for him that I venture now to come to you for help and counsel. Strange things have passed here of late. The gentleman you knew best as Mr. Calverley, but who, in truth, was my great-uncle Radcliffe, proved to be Michael's father, and Michael twice attempted to help him to escape to France, not that he agreed with his opinions, but because he wanted to help us. In consequence of the part I played in helping my uncle's escape the marriage arranged betwixt me and the Under-Sheriff, Mr. Brownrigg, will never take place; indeed, I now see that it has, from the first, been only a mistake—I did not truly know him. Michael being very angry at some words which Mr. Brownrigg spoke to me when we were all arrested, called him out, but at the appointed time our Quaker kinsman persuaded them not to fight. Later on it seems that Michael tried to help his father to escape from gaol by changing clothes with him, and Mr. Brownrigg, deceived by the twilight and not altogether sober, insisted on fighting him when they met not far from Keswick. He slew him, thinking, of course, all the time that it was Michael, and it was not until he brought the body here that we discovered it to be my uncle Radcliffe. Mr. Brownrigg escaped, some say abroad, but others think to London, and Michael was removed to Cockermouth, there to await his trial for aiding and abetting the escape of a Jacobite. I have just learnt, however, that he is now being removed to London, and you will easily understand how greatly this adds to his danger. Here in Cumberland,

where he was well known and where many understand just how things befell, he would have got a fair trial. But in London things might easily be distorted, particularly if, as we fear, his rival, Mr. Brownrigg, is working secretly against him.

Dear Madam, all this is, I fear, very incoherent, but pray, pray help us if you can. If only those in authority could learn the real facts of the case, I am confident he would run little risk, but I dread Mr. Brownrigg's secret plotting, for a story like this can be easily twisted. Worst of all is the difficulty of letting Michael know the truth as to my own heart. It is only since that dreadful moment when I thought he had been killed that I knew what he was to me. And it was but a week before that—from words let fall by Uncle Radcliffe—that I in the least guessed that Michael had for years loved me. We had grown up together, and thoughts of such love as that never crossed my mind. I fancied that I loved Mr. Brownrigg; nay, I did love him as far as I then understood what love means. Oh, if you would but tell me what I can do now! Michael hath sent me a message by old Zinogle; I see from it that he loves me, yet to be wooed in this fashion makes my part far from easy. If I followed my impulse I should hasten after him to London; yet perhaps this might only injure his cause and make people think worse of me than they already do. And yet it seems to me that I ought to be there, for it was through my fault that he was mixed up in this affair, and oh, dear Madam! I love him and would give all that I have to make up to him if possible for what he has suffered through me during these last years. Will you see him in London? Zinogle will let you know which prison they take him to. Will you make him understand what is in my heart? I cannot tell him in a letter. But I think you, being a woman, will understand, and will be able to make him understand too. This is an unusual request to make to a stranger, but I seem to know you both through Michael and through what Sir Wilfrid Lawson has told me of you. Therefore I hope you will pardon my boldness, and

Believe me, your obliged, humble servant,

AUDREY RADCLIFFE.

Having folded and directed this letter, she sealed it with many misgivings, and then wrote a few brief words to Michael himself, taking refuge now in the familiar, friendly style which seemed most natural between them.

Zinogle returned while she was still writing, and hastily signing her name, she began to give him directions and to consult him as to the money he would need on the journey. All the time her heart was full of eager longing to go with him, and though she said not a word as to this, the old man had wit enough to divine it and went away from the island in good spirits, sure that matters looked hopeful for his godson.

He frowned, however, when just as he was riding off from Stable Hills Farm he perceived young Mr. Salkeld approaching, for he knew that he was one of Audrey's admirers, and that his suit had been favoured in former times by Sir Nicholas.

"Now, if three men all urge a woman to take a particular course will she have strength enough to resist them? If they were villains urging her to do wrong, she would be as brave as a lion; but being all good men, and likeable enough, will she be able to withstand their plausible talk, and all that they are sure to say as to the way in which her name is being bandied about in the neighbourhood? She's a proud lassie, and if once they get upon that tack I fear me she'll think more of

her reputation than of my godson's heart. Women are strange folk! strange folk!"

And musing after this fashion, the old man rode back to Keswick, where Billy informed him that Captain Plummer and his prisoner had taken the road to Appleby.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Forget not yet the tried intent
Of such a truth as I have meant;
My great travail so gladly spent
Forget not yet!
Forget not yet the great assays,
The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,
The painful patience in delays
Forget not yet!”

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

ZINOGLE heard of Captain Plummer and his prisoner at more than one wayside inn and at Penrith, but he did not overtake them. On making inquiries, however, as he rode into the quaint little town of Appleby, he learnt that they had put up at the *King's Head*, and accordingly he handed over Firefly to the ostler of that comfortable red-brick inn, and made his way into the public room. There were some half-dozen people present, all supping after the toils of the day, and sitting at table with them were the officer and his charge, who evidently were objects of great interest to the other travellers. Captain Plummer talked with his next-door neighbour, but Michael remained silent, looking tired and depressed and as though eating in chains was anything but ap-

petising. His face lighted up, however, when at last he caught sight of the old fiddler.

"Why, Zinogle!" he exclaimed. "What do you make here?"

"I'm on my way to London, sir," said Zinogle, taking the vacant place beside him and calling for a plate of beef and a tankard of ale.

Captain Plummer glanced at him sharply.

"'Tis the finest musician in Cumberland, sir," said Michael. "Presently, no doubt, he will favour the company with a tune on his fiddle."

Now, most fortunately, it chanced that the captain was a great lover of music, and when, after supper, Zinogle played to them very good-naturedly as long as they cared to listen, he was so much delighted with the fellow's genius that he was perfectly ready to allow him to ride in their company for the rest of the journey. This, moreover, was a natural enough request on the old German's part, for the North road was by no means free from dangers. It was extremely easy to lose one's way altogether between Pontefract and Doncaster, while a lonely traveller always ran the risk of being attacked by highwaymen.

"Ride with us to-morrow, by all means," said the captain, as the company dispersed for the night. "We shall be starting at six o'clock." And so saying, he went out into the passage to give some order to one of the

men, and Zinogle seized the opportunity to thrust Audrey's note into the prisoner's hand.

"You saw her?" he asked, his face lighting up as he put the letter into his breast-pocket.

"Ay, and there's much to hope and little to dread," said Zinogle. "Depend upon it, lad, her heart turns to you. And in damp weather," he added, as the captain returned, "the strings will play the very devil with you." He thrust his fiddle into its case and made as though he were entirely occupied with it.

"Do you play the air *Hope Told a Flattering Tale?*?" asked Michael, glancing at the fiddler with latent amusement.

"No, sir, it's not to my fancy; a peevish, melancholy tune I call it. Give me a cheerful strain. Good-night to you, gentlemen; I shall be ready to join you by your leave at six in the morning."

"Very good," said Captain Plummer, taking the candle from the chambermaid. "Now, Mr. Radcliffe, I must trouble you to follow me." And he marched his prisoner upstairs, the maid looking after them with wide eyes, and shaking her fist at the captain's portly form when she was quite convinced that he would not see her.

"The hard-hearted wretch!" she exclaimed as she lighted a second candle for the fiddler, "making a fine

young gentleman like that sleep in irons! I wish I'd the ironing of him!"

"Tut, tut, lass, he only obeys his orders," said Zinogle, chucking her under the chin. "Moreover, he hath a pretty taste for music. As to the young gentleman, don't trouble your kind heart about him, for he'll soon be through his troubles, being as innocent of Jacobite plots as you are."

"You're a fond, foolish old man," said the maid saucily, thrusting the candlestick into his hand. "'Tis not innocence that saves a man from the gallows. Many an innocent man has been hung. 'Tis interest with them that be in power, and the sharp wits of those that love the prisoner."

And with that she began to sing the ballad of *The Prickly Bush*, which so took the old fiddler's fancy that he would not go to bed until she had taught it him.

Michael, in the room above, had found no opportunity of opening Audrey's note, being never free from Captain Plummer's observation. Tingling with impatience, he had to submit to seeing the candle extinguished, and there only remained to him the comfort of recalling Zinogle's words and of clasping tightly in his hand the unread letter. Meanwhile, through the floor, he could distinctly hear the weird tune of *The Prickly Bush*; nay, even the words were plainly audible in the maid's clear voice, and then in Zinogle's deep tones.

“O hangman, hold thy hand,” he cried,
“O hold thy hand awhile;
For I can see my own dear father
Coming over yonder stile,”

“O father, have you brought me gold?
Or will you set me free?
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree?”

“No, I have not brought thee gold,
I will not set thee free;
But I am come to see thee hung,
All on this high gallows tree.”

Chorus.

“O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore;
If ever I get out of the prickly bush,
I’ll never get in any more!”

“O hangman, hold thy hand,” he cried,
“O hold thy hand awhile;
For I can see my own dear mother
Coming over yonder stile.”

“O mother, have you brought me gold
Or will you set me free?
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree?”

“No, I have not brought thee gold,
I cannot set thee free;
But I am come, alas! to see thee hung,
All on this high gallows tree.”

Chorus.

"O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore;
If ever I get out of the prickly bush,
I'll never get in any more."

"O hangman, hold thy hand," he cried,
"O hold thy hand awhile;
For I can see my own dear love,
Coming over yonder stile."

"O sweetheart, have you brought me gold?
Or will you set me free;
Or be you come to see me hung,
All on this high gallows tree?"

"Yes I have brought thee gold," she cried,
"And I will set thee free;
And I come, but not to see thee hung
All on this high gallows tree."

Chorus.

"O the prickly bush, the prickly bush,
It pricked my heart full sore;
And now I've got out of the prickly bush,
I'll never get in any more."

It was, perhaps, not unnatural that he should dream of his own execution, and of Audrey arriving just in time to stay the hangman's hand, and bid them take the rope from about his neck; but just at the supreme moment of rapture and relief as he caught her to his breast, some noise roused him and he started up to find himself in a

strange bedroom, with half a yard of chain connecting the iron fetters on his wrists, and with Captain Plummer snoring loudly from behind the curtains of the second bed. The return to reality felt somewhat dreary, but nevertheless there was the letter still clasped fast in his right hand; the grey light of early morning stole in, moreover, through the white dimity curtains, and, raising himself on his elbow, he broke the seal and read very eagerly the words which Audrey had written in such haste on the previous day. The letter was full of eager sympathy and anxiety on his behalf, but dared he hope that she really loved him? He read and re-read it half a dozen times; it was frank, friendly, and affectionate, but he could not flatter himself that there was a word in it which she might not have written to him in his Cambridge days, before any thought of love had entered her heart.

His spirits sank yet lower when at Knaresborough he learnt from Zinogle that young Mr. Salkeld had ridden up to Stable Hills Farm just as he left. And the most dismal visions of Audrey being won over by Father Noel's arguments to the Romish Church began to haunt him, while he could readily understand how Sir Nicholas would hail the idea of a marriage which would promptly silence the unkind talk of the neighbourhood with regard to Audrey's escapade as the Borrowdale Bogle. Curiously enough, the only thing that seemed to cheer him was

the strange, weird ballad of *The Prickly Bush*, for this was for ever associated with his dream at Appleby, and every night Zinogle used to sing it, to the great satisfaction of all his hearers, accompanying it on his fiddle in a fashion wholly his own.

At length London was reached, and on a sultry evening towards the end of August, Zinogle took leave of his fellow-travellers, and having learnt that Michael was to be taken to the Tower, repaired to the *Blue Boar* in Holborn, where Firefly could rest her weary bones after the week's journey, and where the fiddler found a rest in one of the upper dormitories.

The next morning, as soon as he deemed it possible to go to the house in Norfolk Street, he delivered Audrey's letter and asked to wait for a reply.

The old butler seemed somewhat puzzled by his strange appearance.

"Mistress Denham only returned yesterday from Katterham," he said, and after some hesitation he bade Zinogle to wait in the very room to which Michael and Lord Downshire's chaplain had once been relegated.

"There be a respectable-looking old man, mistress," he announced, "awaiting for an answer to this letter," and he crossed the withdrawing-room, where Mary sat working at the household accounts.

She put down her pen, and breaking the seal, looked with some surprise at the signature, then with keen

interest read Audrey's appeal for help and counsel. Having ended it, she sat musing for some minutes, wondering how she could best help these lovers, and seeing clearly enough how difficult was the girl's position.

"Uncle and Aunt Denham are at Dr. Martin Lister's and will not be home till four o'clock; there is no possibility of consulting them," she reflected. "I must somehow get an order to see Mr. Michael Radcliffe in the Tower, but I don't know whom to ask. Perhaps the Wharncliffes will know. I will call and see them; and since this messenger of Mistress Radcliffe's is a respectable old man, he will do as escort, I need not trouble to take Anne with me."

Hastily dressing, she went downstairs and began to question Zinogle a little as to what had passed at Keswick. And still talking over the strange events of the summer, they made their way to Mr. Wharncliffe's house, which stood in a pleasant walled garden in Drury Lane.

It chanced that both he and his wife were on the lawn at the back of the house, and Mary left Zinogle to wait within and, joining them beneath the mulberry tree from which they were gathering the fruit, told them her errand.

"I can, you see, do nothing until I have seen Mr.

Michael Radcliffe," she said. "And I thought you would know to whom I ought to apply."

"Why, that is reversing matters strangely," said Hugo Wharncliffe, laughing. "'Tis you, Mary, who knew so well how to get into a prison, and how to manage matters in the best possible way with hard-hearted gaolers."

She laughed.

"'Twas easy enough to get into Newgate," she said. "But I have a notion that for the Tower a special order is needed."

"True, I believe you have to apply to the Secretary of State. But, then, since my Lord Shrewsbury resigned office in the summer, no fresh secretary has been appointed in his place. He, no doubt, would have been the man. I should think the best way now would be to go to my Lord Nottingham, and ask him to give you a letter to the lieutenant of the Tower."

"You will have to assure him that you don't mean to aid and abet the prisoner's escape," said Joyce Wharncliffe, smiling.

"Apparently that is what Mr. Radcliffe himself is in prison for," said Mary. "And, then, to make matters worse, of course, he has a love story, which in his absence is likely to get into a hopeless tangle."

"I will see my Lord Nottingham, and do my best to get a letter for you," said Hugo Wharncliffe. "By the time you and Joyce have gathered the mulberries and thoroughly settled this north-country romance, I shall be back again. Perhaps the old messenger had best come with me. What a brow the man has! He looks like a musician."

"I must come and see him," said Joyce, thinking little enough about Zinogle, but as usual following her husband to the door, loth to lose him even for the shortest time.

"Don't you remember, Mary," she said, rejoining her friend presently under the mulberry tree, "how last November, at Whitehall, Mr. Calverley, as we then called him, spoke of this grievance of Michael Derwent's, and said it was some unlucky love story? Oh, how I hope that you will be able to set things right for them, as you did for us; that you will make two other people as happy, if possible, as we are!"

"It seems to me that Mistress Radcliffe had far best come to the south herself," said Mary. "Clearly she longs to do that, and if the case comes on for trial her evidence is very important. Well, it will be easier to judge after seeing the prisoner. Poor fellow, I fear he will not be so patient as Hugo was; he is of a different temperament, and with a good deal of the hot-blooded

Welshman in him, I should fancy. It seems to me very strange that this Mr. Brownrigg could mistake his father for him. As far as I can recollect, Mr. Calverley did not in the least resemble him. Old Zinogle, the messenger, says their voices were exactly alike, however, and their height and figure the same. Perhaps, after all, in the twilight and with the change of perukes, it was not so unnatural."

They were still talking of the Cumberland romance, as Hugo Wharncliffe had prophesied, when, in an hour's time, he returned.

"Here is your letter from Lord Nottingham," he said, smiling. "Give that to my Lord Lucas at the Tower, and you will be admitted as often as you please to see Mr. Michael Radcliffe. His case is being inquired into. It seems that the government have been privately notified that he is much embroiled with the Jacobite plotters. I fear the fellow was rash when he was here last winter and in the spring."

"Did you hear Mr. Brownrigg's name mentioned?" asked Mary.

"No, but my Lord Nottingham said something of evidence against him having been gained from a well-known young Jacobite named Enderby, who says he met him in June, just after the King went to Ireland; that he is ready to swear that he was not only in con-

clave with Calverley and Father Sharp, but that a lemon-letter was actually being written in the room under his very eyes."

"And I am prepared to swear that only just before Michael Derwent and Sir Wilfrid left us in the summer, he had heard nothing at all of such things as lemon-letters," said Mary, "for I remember how much surprised he was when I told him about the ones that were so much perplexing the Queen. He had never heard, then, of lemon-juice being used for secret correspondence."

"Enderby is a featherpate and a chatterbox, but I believe him to be honest," said Hugo Wharncliffe. "Try if you can't get the matter explained by Michael Radcliffe, for when the case comes on, it is sure to be used against him. Don't hasten off yet; I have left the old fiddler having a crack with Jeremiah over a tankard of home-brewed."

"And it is high time we all had our noonings," said Joyce. "I will bring curds and cream, and we can eat them with the mulberries. Take Mary to see the roses, meanwhile."

"To be sure," said Hugo, leading the way to a path at the side of the garden, "and you must see too how well the shrubs Mr. Evelyn sent me from Wotton are thriving. And, by-the-bye, you must not forget to wear a flower of some sort when you visit the prisoner; that

was ever part of the programme. Don't you remember how, all through that winter, when you came to see me in Newgate, you contrived to wear either flowers or bright berries?"

"Ay, and at Christmas, having with great care put on the best sprig of holly to be found, I learnt that it did but remind you of the walk to Tyburn," said Mary, smiling, yet with a little choking in her throat, nevertheless, as she thought of those dark days. "As for the flowers, Lady Temple had given me the free run of her greenhouses at Battersea, and I used to ransack them till the gardener grew to hate me for stealing his best blooms."

"Is Lady Temple at Moor Park now?" asked Hugo Wharncliffe thoughtfully.

"No, she is in town for the sake of being near the Queen while the King is in Ireland."

"It only struck me that, if private help is to get Mr. Michael Radcliffe out of his predicament, Lady Temple would be the best person living to give advice and aid."

"True, that is well thought of, Hugo. She hath great influence with the Queen, and since the sad death of her son, the Queen's friendship for her has been stronger than ever."

"The son was her last living child, was he not?"

“Yes, and of course the shock of his sudden death was terrible. But I think Lady Temple is one of those that try to make the outer world the richer when their private world has been bereaved. She will be sure to interest herself in such a case as this of Michael Radcliffe.”

“And you, Mary, will, I very well know, hold a brief for his lady-love. By-the-bye, what is her name?”

“Mistress Audrey Radcliffe; he is her first cousin, once removed. But as a matter of fact, they have only lately known that there was any kinship betwixt them, for his father only owned him at the moment of their arrest.”

Hugo Wharncliffe plucked the sweetest roses he could find for her, and then, while they sat under the tree, over their noonings, which Joyce had fetched on a dainty silver tray, old Jeremiah, the servant, went to fetch a sedan chair, in which Mary was carried to the Tower.

“Don’t forget to come and play your fiddle to me this evening,” said the master of the house to old Zinogle as he trotted off in the wake of the chair.

“Ay, ay, sir,” said the fiddler. “I’ll sing you the ballad of *The Prickly Bush*. And I hope and trust the lady will contrive to get Mr. Radcliffe out of this prickly bush he’s got himself into.”

Hugo Wharncliffe smiled as he closed the garden door, and slipped his arm round his wife.

"Mary will get him out if anyone can," he said. "She has been helping unlucky folk out of the prickles of life for the last seven years."

"Yes," said his wife. "Somehow it always seems to me that she has begun her heaven down here."

CHAPTER XIV.

“O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girl with golden wings,
And thou, unblemished form of Chastity.”

JOHN MILTON.

JOYCE WHARNCLIFFE'S words were very true, and Mary Denham was always singularly happy when with the two whose happiness had been made out of the sorrow of her own girlhood. Nevertheless, as was but natural, her life was often lonely and anxious, for no one can go about helping, as Hugo expressed it, unlucky folk out of the prickles of life without wounding their own hands in the process.

She had inherited, moreover, from her father—a cavalier of the type of Lord Falkland—a love of peace, and a craving for perfect freedom of religious thought, which, even in the more tolerant days in which she lived, made perfect satisfaction impossible; while from her mother, whose childhood had been spent under a harsh and unloving *régime*, she had inherited a certain wistfulness of temperament, not amounting to melancholy, yet disposing her always to see the pathetic side of life.

And thus it happened that as she was carried be-

neath Temple Bar she shuddered at the ghastly row of heads set on poles, above the gateway, though most people had become perfectly callous to the familiar sight; and that as her chairmen elbowed their way between the houses and the row of posts, which formed the only protection for chairs and foot passengers from the wheel traffic of the crowded city streets, she failed to get much diversion from the amusing sights that were not lacking, and was keenly alive to the misery and the selfish greed and the sin which were all too visible.

When they had passed St. Paul's churchyard, she drew Audrey's letter from her pocket and read it carefully for the third time, wondering much how she had best set to work at the difficult task intrusted to her. Fortunately, she was the last woman to be daunted by the hardness of a task; she had long ago learnt to grasp her nettle, and Michael and Audrey could not have found a better champion. It was in this curious mingling of strength and a most womanly gentleness that her charm lay and the secret of her influence.

Her eyes filled with tears when, as the chair was carried across Tower Hill, she saw from the window the very place where, seven years before, she had seen Algernon Sidney butchered. How vividly the scene still lingered in her memory! Every tiniest detail seemed burnt in upon her brain: the vast throng of people, the

cold, clear light of the December morning, the black scaffold, the grumbling executioner, who had asked for more than three guineas, because, forsooth, the patriot was of noble birth! And then—amid all the ghastly surroundings—the death that was like a triumph, the serene composure of the victim as he handed to his faithful servant the letter for Hugo, his watch for another friend, then knelt to say that “prayer as short as a grace” with which he commended his soul to God. Almost she seemed still to see him lying there with his head on the block, quitting the world with a smile and a pleasantry on his lips. For the executioner, anxious to know whether the victim had settled himself or meant to move any more, had cried out, with the axe poised in the air:—

“Are you ready, sir? Will you rise again?”

And Mary had heard the reply in the clear, firm voice she knew so well:—

“Not till the general resurrection. Strike on!”

Alone he had lived—for God and the people—and alone—save for God and the people—he had died.

Arriving now at the Lion’s Gate, braced up for the present effort for justice by the remembrance of the dead patriot, she handed her letter for Lord Lucas to one of the picturesquely clad warders, and was admitted with old Zinogle as her attendant.

It was one thing to come to the Tower as a pastime

to see the lions, and quite another to pass under the grim gateway of Middle Tower and Byward Tower to visit a prisoner. Involuntarily she shivered at the gaunt greyness of the place. Up to the left, pigeons were wheeling and circling happily about the massive White Tower with its turrets and its hidden torture chambers, where in the past so many hundreds had suffered; while close to the path along which she walked rose the solid old Bell Tower, from which the curfew was rung, and within whose walls poor Lady Arabella Stuart had languished.

Mary turned to the warder with a question:—

“Where is Mr. Radcliffe confined?”

“He be in the Bloody Tower,” said the man. “Up yonder is his window,” and he pointed to a small, late-Norman lattice, immediately facing Traitors’ Gate.

“Why, that was Colonel Algernon Sidney’s room,” said Mary.

“Yes, mistress,” replied the warder. “This way, if you please.”

And he led them up a dark, winding staircase, and unlocked the door of a narrow cell, measuring about twelve feet by four feet.

Mary saw that the prisoner was seated with his back to them, on an oaken bench. He was hard at work writing, and his inkhorn and papers were on the deep, splayed window-seat. Glancing round to see who was

entering, he sprang to his feet at sight of her, and came forward with eager words of greeting and thanks.

"This is good of you, indeed," he said. "I never thought Zinogle would have gone to seek you and to tell you of my misfortunes."

"'Twas no doing of mine, sir," said the old fiddler; "I was but a messenger. However, I will leave Mistress Denham to explain that to ye, and will have a crack with the gentleman in the parti-coloured raiment outside."

"Go and have a tankard of ale with him," suggested Michael, "and bid him set it to my account. Drink to my speedy release, Zinogle."

"Well," said the fiddler, mopping his huge forehead, "I won't deny but it's hot work walking through the streets o' London the first week in September. Many a time I wished myself back in the north country."

And he strolled off, humming the tune of *The Oak and the Ash and the Bonny Ivy Tree*.

Mary, who all this time had been quietly observing the narrow cell and its occupant, could not help rejoicing to see how greatly the events of the summer had changed Michael. When she had last seen him, early in June, he had borne the look of one who struggles bravely on, trying his best to do his duty, but finding it uphill work.

Now, on this September morning, although he was a prisoner in the grim old Tower, and well knew that his worst enemy was plotting his destruction, there was an air of hope and brightness about him which she had never before seen.

"I think," she said merrily, "you are like King William. He looks sadly bored at court, but on the battlefield they say he is as cheery and full of high spirits as can be. You are far more cheerful-looking to-day than when you were with us in Norfolk Street."

"It is because I have once more something to hope for," he said. "You remember how I told you of Mistress Audrey Radcliffe? Well, thank heaven, her betrothal to the Under-Sheriff is at an end, and I have been fool enough to dream that she might, one day, be my wife. Do you think the hope was too audacious?"

"No, indeed," she said gently. "I think it would be very natural that, having been wholly deceived in Mr. Brownrigg, having discovered in time that he was utterly unworthy of the trust she had reposed in him, her heart should instinctively turn to the man who has so long loved her in vain."

"If I only dared be certain that my hopes were well founded," said Michael, pacing up and down the cell restlessly. "You don't know what it was to pass actually within sight of Lord's Island last week and never to be able to see her."

"You did not quite understand what Zinogle meant just now," said Mary Denham. "He said he had come to me only as a messenger. It was as Mistress Radcliffe's messenger that he came. She had done me the greatest honour one woman can show to another, and being unable to meet you, and hear from your own lips what you would fain say, has asked me to see you and make you understand all that she cannot write in reply to your letter. Sir," she smiled with a certain sweet archness which for a moment brought back the youth to her face, "I do not think you need trouble any more about the audacity of your hope. Your lady has wakened from a bad dream, and has learnt to look favourably on your suit."

"What does she say? What does she say in your letter?" he asked breathlessly.

And Mary, after a moment's consideration, put the letter into his hands, feeling that Audrey's own words would best reveal her heart to her lover.

Michael caught at the sheet eagerly, and unfolding it, crossed the cell to the one small window, that he might the better see to read it. When he again turned towards her he looked radiant, and Mary could not but reflect that so happy a face could seldom have been seen within prison walls.

"That is well," she said. "I am sure, now, that you understand her."

"There is only one thing left to trouble me," he said, sitting down beside her. "Zinogle met young Mr. Salkeld, one of her suitors, on his way to visit Lord's Island, and that means, I very well know, that her grandfather and Father Noel will be doing their utmost to persuade Audrey to accept him. He is rich, a Papist, and a very pleasant, good-hearted fellow. You can guess how hard it will be for a girl to keep her head clear, when such a kindly and clever priest as Father Noel does his utmost to entangle her in argument."

"True, that is a real danger," said Mary thoughtfully, "specially after the shock of all she has been through and the bigotry of Mr. Brownrigg; but don't you see from this letter how greatly she longs to come to London? And, indeed, I think her evidence will certainly be needed."

"No, no," said Michael; "think of that long journey with all its dangers! And what could she do alone in London? Had her grandfather been fit to escort her, it might have been different, but he is an infirm, old man."

"As I came here," said Mary, "a plan came into my head. How do you think it would be if I went up to the north myself and brought her back with me?"

"It would be heaven to see her," said Michael. "But the dangers of the journey would be as great for you, to

say nothing of all the fatigue. 'Tis kind and thoughtful, like all your plans, but———”

“Oh! as for me, I am a well-seasoned traveller,” said Mary, laughing, “and quite of an age to play duenna to Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. Moreover, it happens that my cousin Rupert and his wife are staying with kinsfolk in York, and I think, for the sake of helping me, Rupert would very likely consent to ride with me to Keswick. With him, and with old Zinogle, and my own old groom, who knows the road well, we shall be able to brave a few difficulties and dangers. There can be no doubt, from this letter, that Mistress Audrey longs to come, and her coming is only wise and right, for she did involve you first in this affair, and is the only one who can bear evidence at your trial. By-the-bye, Mr. Wharncliffe tells me that a young Jacobite gentleman named Enderby vowed you knew in June of the lemon-letters that were intercepted and brought to the Queen.”

“You yourself were the first to tell me of the letters,” said Michael. “But he is so far right that just before you mentioned the matter to me, Enderby came into my father’s rooms in Villiers Street and spoke of the lemon on the table, as though it were a sign that he might freely discuss his journey to St. Germain. I puzzled much over the meaning of his words, and, of course, guessed that all three gentlemen were plotting King James’ return, but you know the air was thick just then

with rumours of plots, and I did not feel bound to reveal to anyone words accidentally heard while on a friendly visit."

"I knew you would be able to explain the matter," said Mary cheerfully. "It is clear that Mr. Brownrigg is secretly trying to poison the minds of those in authority with regard to your case, but we will outwit him yet. I think, however, it will be best to do things as quickly as possible, and if I can arrange matters at home with my uncle and aunt I will set off for the north to-morrow or the next day. So if you do not see me or hear from me for the next fortnight, you will understand that I am on the Great North road."

Michael could only reiterate his thanks, realising afresh how bright a day it had been in his life's calendar when he first met Mistress Denham in her primrose-satin gown.

"Are you well supplied with all you need?" she inquired.

"Yes, save with patience," he said, smiling. "The days will seem age-long till you return."

"I will write a few lines to Mr. Evelyn, and ask him to visit you," she replied. "He comes to the Tower occasionally to see my Lord Clarendon. I hear there is a rumour that he is to be released on bail before long."

"Perhaps you would also lend me a few books," said Michael. "I try to wile away the time with writing

down my recollections, but 'tis no easy matter to write in gaol. Methinks other men's thoughts pass the time better."

Mary promised to send him her copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, and whatever other volumes she could lay hands on, and having called in Zinogle to discuss the likelihood of Firefly's having recovered enough from her long journey to return the next day, she bade the prisoner farewell, leaving him in the best of spirits, and purposely forgetting to take away with her Audrey's letter.

CHAPTER XV.

“The hour is with God. Hope is with all.”

SUN-DIAL MOTTO.

WHEN Mistress Mary Denham once took a matter in hand she had a fashion of carrying it through at all costs, and spite of the unusually cold and stormy weather, which just then set in most unseasonably, she journeyed to the north and allowed neither wind nor rain nor bad roads to check her undertaking. They were forced, however, to sleep at Penrith instead of pressing on during the last day to Keswick, as she had intended, and when the kindly landlady of the inn helped her out of her dripping clothes, she was fain to confess that she was tired out.

A night's rest soon restored her, and, fortunately, the weather was, as the people expressed it, “taking up” when she woke the next morning, eager to set forth on the last stage of the journey.

True, the sky was grey as they rode out of Penrith and looked back for a last glimpse of the Castle and of the old red sandstone church, but as they journeyed on past Blencathara the sun shone out brightly, and Rupert,

who had done little but swear at the bad weather all the way from York, now became once more a good-natured and cheerful companion.

“Having dragged me against my will from the flesh-pots of Egypt, that is to say, of the Minster Yard, and done your best to drown me like all Pharaoh’s army, you are now, it seems, bringing me to the land of milk and honey itself,” he said, laughing, as they made their way through the exquisite wooded glen through which the Greta flows towards Keswick.

And Mary thought he had not used over-strong language when, presently, the road brought them into sight of the little market town nestled on the shores of Derwentwater, with woods just mellowed by the touch of an early autumn, and mountains rising on every side as though to shelter this paradise from the rude outer world. They put up at the *Royal Oak*, and Zinogle went off at once to Lord’s Island, bearing a letter to Audrey from Mistress Denham. As good fortune would have it, however, he had scarcely quitted the town, when, crossing the field from Friar’s Crag, he saw Audrey herself, with Kitty her waiting-maid in attendance, bearing a basket of food and medicine for some invalid in Keswick.

“What, Zinogle!” she exclaimed eagerly, hastening towards him as he dismounted. “Are you back so soon? I have scarce looked for you yet.”

"I delivered your letter, mistress, and here is the answer," said the fiddler, unable to resist the temptation of watching her face as she read the missive. Its surprised delight rewarded the good-hearted old fellow for all the toils he had undergone, and his broad face was one huge smile of satisfaction as she took his hand in hers.

"Dear old friend, how can I ever thank you for all you have done?" she exclaimed, her face aglow with hope. "Now I must come straightway and see Mistress Denham, and you must come with me to make me known to her. Kitty, give me the basket, and do you lead the mare back to the stable. Poor Firefly! she will not give you much trouble, she is spent with all this long journey."

Zinogle turned back again to Keswick, and on the way answered Audrey's eager questions as to where he had overtaken Michael, how they had prospered on the road, what his prison was like, and so forth.

When, at length, they had reached the inn and were ushered by the landlady into a private parlour, Audrey looked most eagerly into the face of the unknown friend who had ventured so much on her behalf and had generously responded to her plea for help and counsel.

Although it was not yet the middle of September, Mary had ordered a fire to be kindled, for the day, though bright, was very cold; she was sitting close to

the fender, shaking out the long black feathers of her riding hat which had suffered a good deal from the heavy rains of the last week.

On hearing her visitor announced by the old fiddler, she rose quickly, and came forward with the most unceremonious and eager of greetings, which at once set Audrey at her ease and destroyed all her fears of the unknown fine lady from London. On her part, Mary Denham looked with keen interest at the girl who had claimed her help. Audrey, in her mourning attire, and with her wide grey eyes full of that unconscious appeal which one sees in the eyes of all who cannot put their trouble into words, instantly found a place in her heart. During the summer she had regained her health, and yet the delicate colour and the youthful *contour* of the face only seemed to make its wistful expression more marked.

Zinogle left them to a *tête-à-tête*, and sitting together by the hearth, they soon learnt to know each other, for the friendship that may need years to ripen during an uneventful period, springs up with the rapidity of Jonah's gourd when some crisis makes two people feel a real and instant need of each other.

"I think your wish to be in London is perfectly justified," said Mary, when she had told of her visit to the Tower. "Michael shrank from the thought of such a journey for you, but was quite at ease when I proposed

coming here with my cousin, Rupert Denham, to fetch you. Then, if you will stay with us in Norfolk Street, I do not see that you need be exposed to any risk whatever. Of course, though, you will like to discuss matters with Sir Nicholas Radcliffe."

"Yes, but my grandfather will not, I think, object," said Audrey. "I am now of age, and he knows that I shall never consent to change my faith or to wed Mr. Salkeld, for I told him so only yesterday, when some definite reply had to be made to his suit. That trouble is over; though you would scarce believe me, did I tell you all the arguings and reasonings we have had as to it. You see, it was Father Noel's great wish."

"Yes, and a very natural wish on his part," said Mary. "Has he recovered from his lameness? Could you leave home now?"

"Yes, I am glad to say, he is walking about again, and will take good care of my grandfather while I am away. How can I ever thank you enough for coming here, all this long distance, and for making things so easy for me?"

"Oh, as to the travelling, I like that very well," said Mary, unclasping a little ivory fruit-knife and beginning to curl her feathers. "And for our return I hope the weather may be more propitious. Tell me, how soon could you be ready to start?"

"As soon as the groom will let Firefly travel again,"

said Audrey eagerly. "The less time we lose the better, for I dread the Under-Sheriff's secret scheming."

"Yes, there is no doubt that he is at work," said Mary. "When I left the Tower, I went to see the wife of Sir William Temple, a very dear old friend, who has been like a second mother to me. She is one of the wisest counsellors I know, and it chances that she has much influence with the Queen, for Sir William Temple was the English representative at The Hague years ago. Her idea is to discuss Mr. Michael Radcliffe's story with her Majesty, and tell her the whole facts of the case. If it seems well, she will arrange that you should see her Majesty and yourself intercede for your lover, explaining how wholly free from blame he has been in this matter."

"Oh!" cried Audrey, clasping her hands, "if only I could do something for him! It has been so cruelly hard to wait here since he has been in prison, knowing all the time that it was my fault he was ever mixed up in the affair."

"He would scarcely wish not to have been mixed up in it," said Mary, smiling; "for 'tis to the strange happenings of last July that he owes all his hope for the future. What a trying life his has been, and how curiously in the end the revelation of his parentage was made! By-the-bye, I should much like to see this Borrowdale of which he so often speaks; they tell me it is the most wild region in all England."

She could not, however, be induced to come and stay in the Lord's Island mansion, knowing well that their arrival would perturb such a recluse as Sir Nicholas, and would be little convenient to the young mistress of the house just on the eve of her own departure.

Audrey induced her, however, to promise that both she and Mr. Rupert Denham would dine with them on the morrow, after which they might visit the dale and see the place where Sir Wilfrid Lawson had discovered Michael years ago. To everyone's relief, the meeting between Mistress Denham and Sir Nicholas passed off very happily. The old knight brightened visibly as she talked with him at dinner, and afterwards he even ventured out for a few minutes to pace with her up and down the pleasance, and to talk with her about his granddaughter's future.

"The maid will not hear of wedding the son of Sir Francis Salkeld, which has ever been my wish for her," he said. "And the marriage of her mother's devising with the Under-Sheriff has, thank heaven, come to naught. No doubt, the happiest thing now will be for her to accept the suit of her cousin, and the sooner they are wedded the better. I shall raise no objection; indeed, I shall be glad to have her safeguarded from Mr. Brownrigg."

Mary guessed that the disappointment was much keener to the old priest, and she could not help liking

him, because she saw that, although he had been check-mated, he took his failure so well, and evidently had such real affection for both Michael and Audrey. He and Rupert Denham rowed the two ladies to Lowdore, and they walked to the waterfall in the glen behind the mill, that the visitors might see how fine it looked after the heavy rains.

“Come!” said Rupert cheerfully; “this well-nigh makes up for the soaking we got on the road”; and in his jovial fashion he began to make Audrey laugh by describing what he called the cavalcade of drowned rats which had halted at Penrith.

As for Mary, she wandered on under Father Noel’s guidance close to the fall, gazing at the wonderful mass of foaming water, and trying to realise that this incessant downpour had been falling, falling in snowlike whiteness ever since the days of Adam, and would continue long after she and all she loved had passed away. Never in her life had she seen anything that so impressed her as those towering, perpendicular crags on either side of the cascade, and in presence of this grand bit of nature, as in the realised presence of God, all the differences of opinion and practice faded away into insignificance, so that she forgot the points on which she and Father Noel differed, and only drew near to him in the far greater matters which they held in common.

By-and-by, as they walked on to Borrowdale and

visited the place by the birch-tree near the Derwent, where the Borrowdale foundling had been discovered, he talked to her long and earnestly as to the danger Michael stood in from a man of Henry Brownrigg's overbearing and unscrupulous character, strongly advising that if, as they hoped, Michael's release was obtained, and the matter never brought before the law courts, he and Audrey should be wedded with all possible speed that he might the better protect her.

They ended their expedition by a visit to Anne Fisher at Grange Farm, and Mary heard her description of the little foundling brought to her years ago by Sir Wilfrid Lawson; of how, from the first, they had been sure from the way in which it was clothed that it was of gentle birth, together with many details of Michael's childhood, over which the foster-mother quite forgot her northern reserve, and chatted in the raciest fashion. Nor was it possible to depress the good woman, for even after hearing of Michael's imprisonment in the Tower she was ready roundly to assert that before long they would have him in Borrowdale again, since all his life he had somehow contrived to conquer difficulties and win his way when things seemed most against him.

Her cheerful confidence comforted Audrey not a little, and carried her through the painful parting with her grandfather two days later.

It was arranged that they should only ride as far as

York, after which the grooms should stable the horses in the city, leaving Mary Denham and Audrey to travel in the coach with Mrs. Rupert Denham to London.

To Audrey the journey seemed endless, but then she had never in her life travelled further than to Raby Castle. Fortunately, she was young and strong, and could stand a good deal of fatigue; moreover, her girlish devotion to Mistress Mary Denham made the intercourse of those days a keen delight, and when, on the Saturday night, they reached York, both Mary and her cousin protested that she looked far too cheerful to play the part of a distressed damsel going to rescue her lover from prison.

After a Sunday's rest and a visit to the Minster, they started off by the public coach early on Monday morning. It was anything but a comfortable mode of travelling, for they were pent up inside the springless vehicle which held six people and lumbered heavily along over the rough road, mercilessly jolting the occupants. However, since the rain was falling heavily, it was something to be under shelter, and Rupert Denham and his pretty wife Damaris proved very amusing companions, somewhat shocking two stately old gentlewomen who shared the coach, but eventually winning their hearts by their real good-nature.

London should have been reached on the fourth day, but owing to the rain, and to a slight accident to one of

the horses, which hindered them between Huntingdon and Hatfield, they did not arrive until the Friday.

Mary looked a little anxiously at her charge, when, having dismounted from the coach, they drove in a hackney carriage from the inn to Norfolk Street. For Audrey, who had been so blithe and cheerful throughout the journey, seemed now, as they rattled over the paving stones in the crowded thoroughfares, to look worn and anxious. She could not have described the sense of deadly oppression that had stolen over her as she realised that in this city Henry Brownrigg was somewhere trying to weave a web of falsehoods which should entangle Michael and prove his ruin. Every moment she dreaded to see him, till at length she confided her secret terror to Mary, and was comforted by her quiet rejoinder.

"Oh, that is not at all likely to happen. There is nothing to make him expect your arrival, and you must remember what a great place it is. You are not in the least likely to come across him."

And yet, had they but known, even as she spoke these words, Henry Brownrigg, chancing to come out of the door of the *Rainbow Coffee House*, caught sight of Audrey, and amazed by so unexpected an apparition, followed the coach as it slowly made its way through Temple Bar and along the Strand, not resting until he had discovered the house at which it stopped in Norfolk Street.

A pastry-cook's boy with a tray on his head had just left the door; he asked him the name of the owner of the house.

"Why, any fool knows that!" said the lad saucily. "Sir William Denham, to be sure, Mr. Countryman."

Henry Brownrigg turned away with a frown to reflect on this new factor with which he had to reckon, and to arrange his plans, which now bade fair to be seriously complicated.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Awake! awake! I bring, lover, I bring
The newis glad that blissful ben and sure
Of the comfort; now laugh and play and sing,
That art beside so glad an aventure;
For in the hevyn decretit is the cure.”

THE KING'S QUAIR.

AUDREY was roused after a good night's sleep by the strange cries of the London streets; she lay dreamily wondering what in the world “Colly Molly Puffe!” repeated again and again, could mean, until it died away in the distance and gave place to the more intelligible “New River water! New River water!” This in its turn was succeeded by “Remember the poor prisoners!” which completely roused her and made her jump out of bed and peep through the curtains. Down below in the street, with a large basket fastened to his back and a money-box in his hand, walked a thin scarecrow of a man, with an old, battered felt hat, a ragged coat, and knee-breeches tied with string. She guessed that he must be one of the prisoners from Ludgate or the Fleet, who were allowed to patrol the streets and beg

for food or money, without which the poor wretches must have starved.

Her thoughts, naturally, flew to her own prisoner in the Tower, and hastily dressing, she joined Mary and Sir William Denham in the breakfast-room, for it had been arranged on the previous night that Sir William, who wished to see Lord Torrington in the Tower, should accompany them.

It was, therefore, in the Denham coach that Audrey drove to visit her lover, and as they drew near to the Tower the colour in her sweet face rivalled the rose which Mary had pinned in her black dress. Here in this great gloomy place, which was not one tower, as she had fancied, but a great collection of towers and gateways, protected by battlemented walls and portcullises, and by a vast moat which could be flooded if need arose, Michael was doomed to remain until the King and Queen had learnt the true facts of his case and had been persuaded to release him. Fortunately, she had absolute confidence in their justice, and her face was bright with hope as the warder led them up the winding stone stairs.

"Mr. Radcliffe be taking his exercise on the leads," said the man. "Belike, since the cell is small, you would liefer see him up there."

To this they gladly agreed, and as they emerged from the dark turret staircase on to the top of the

Bloody Tower, Audrey saw her lover intently watching a great barge just passing by on the Thames. Her heart leapt within her when Michael came swiftly forward to greet them, his face radiant at sight of her. Then, after a few minutes' general talk and many eager inquiries as to their journey, Sir William and Mary considerately went with the warder to call upon Lord Torrington, who, since the battle off Beachy Head, had been kept prisoner, and was awaiting his trial for his unworthy conduct on that disastrous day. As they disappeared down the staircase Audrey glanced half-shyly round the battlemented roof.

"They do not give you much space to walk in," she said, looking anxiously at him to see how he had stood the discomforts of prison life.

"I have all I need," he said, lifting her hand to his lips. "The comfort I hungered for was brought me by Mistress Denham in the assurance of your love."

"Oh, Mic," she cried, her eyes filling with tears, "you will never know how sorely I longed to come with Zinogle. But I dared not; I feared it might do your cause harm. And when I tried to write to you, somehow the words would not come."

"My beloved!" he exclaimed, taking her in his arms, "I hardly yet know how to believe that you indeed can care for me. I have loved you all my life, and when

we were at Raby I dared to hope that you, too, cared. When that proved a vain dream——”

“Oh, hush!” she said. “Do not make me think again of the mistake that has cost us all so much. I was deceived, and that night of the arrest would gladly have died. And yet, Mic, there was a worse time even than that. It was when I heard that you were dead, and for the first time understood all you were to me.”

“Did that make you care?” he exclaimed.

“It made me understand my own heart,” she replied, “and for some days I had been learning to see what you really were. Oh, Mic! if you were but out of prison, all now would be well.”

“I scarcely think I am in prison just this minute,” he said, raining kisses on her face. “As Colonel Lovelace sang:—

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

Dost remember his lines?”

“Yes,” she said, humming the air softly. “And yet, all the same, dear heart, I long to have you away from this grim prison.”

“’Tis not half so cruel a place as I was in when last I heard you sing,” he said with a smile. “Shall I ever forget that night when Father Noel forced me to come

into the withdrawing-room while you were singing 'See the chariot at hand here of love'?" Audrey clung to him more closely.

"Mic, it terrifies me," she faltered, "to think how little we really know what is going on all about us. I must so often have hurt you, though I little dreamt it. And all round us people were scheming and plotting while everything seemed to me clear and simple. It frightens me, for now truly we know that the Under-Sheriff is almost certainly planning your ruin.

"The past should give you confidence," he replied cheerfully. "See how all the plots have come to naught! Oh, we shall baffle them yet, I trust, and when I am free, why then, Audrey, I will beg you to end this time of waiting and to be my wife at once. Then together we can journey back to the north country."

"Indeed," she said, blushing, "Mistress Denham and my grandfather agreed that it would be the safest course. And next week I trust to have an interview with her Majesty, if it can be arranged."

"Have you yet seen Lady Temple?"

"No, there is some idea that we shall see her after service at the Abbey to-morrow. She always goes there when at her house at Battersea, and Mary says I must tell her the whole tale, so that she may be able to interest the Queen."

"Yet, if you drew a really truthful picture," he said,

beginning to laugh, "her Majesty would scarce be moved to pity. For never, I am sure, was there in this Bloody Tower a more thoroughly happy man than I am. Think of the two little princes murdered here; of Sir Walter Raleigh, who spent one of his imprisonments in the room below; of Archbishop Laud; and of Algernon Sidney, who, from the very cell in which I sleep, went to the scaffold. Hark! I hear steps on the stairs; they have ended their visit to my Lord Torrington. Now comes the hard part of prison life—the parting from you!"

When the Denhams came out on the leads, the two lovers were standing sedately by the battlements, apparently studying the shipping on the river; but Mary was quite at rest about them when they turned to inquire after Lord Torrington, for Audrey's happy face was crimson, and in Michael's eyes there was the light which is only seen in the eyes of an accepted lover.

They drove back to Norfolk Street in excellent spirits, and as they stepped from the coach, a poor old beggar, bent and crippled, held out his hand for alms; Audrey dropped a penny into it, being in her happiness very tender-hearted. But as they went upstairs Mary Denham warned her not to give to street beggars, since the London streets were full of impostors. As a matter of fact, the cripple became straight and alert directly he had reached the Strand, and in a wonderfully short

space of time was making his way up the steep stairs of a house in a remote corner of the city.

Here he was admitted into the presence of no less a person than Mr. Under-Sheriff Brownrigg.

"I watched the house, sir," he said, "as you directed, and Sir William Denham, together with two ladies, drove to the Tower; they have now just returned."

"Let me hear you describe the ladies," said the Under-Sheriff, re-filling his pipe.

"The elder, sir, might have been about thirty, had dark hair, and wore a large hat with curling feathers about the brim. The other was younger and fairer, and wore a mourning dress."

"Good! that will do. Go early to-morrow and bring me word directly the two ladies go out. They will probably attend some church; find out which they go to, and come quickly and let me know."

Accordingly, on Sunday morning, the beggar again stood in Norfolk Street and asked for alms as the ladies stepped into the coach.

This time, however, Audrey shook her head, remembering Mary's warning, and the spy, with an air of abject misery, stood whining by the carriage-door, listening intently, however, to Mistress Denham's directions to the footman.

"To the Abbey," she said, and having seen the horses turned towards Westminster, the cripple cheer-

fully repaired to the city to receive the Under-Sheriff's pay, together with instructions to call the next morning at nine o'clock.

When the fellow had gone, Henry Brownrigg, completely transformed by a red wig and the attire of a London tradesman, repaired to Westminster Abbey, and with some difficulty succeeded in discovering Audrey's whereabouts. All through the sermon he watched her intently, and afterwards had the satisfaction of seeing her waiting about with her companion in the nave. He lingered as near them as he dared, and presently saw Mistress Denham speak to a very fine-looking old lady, dressed in deep mourning, who came down the steps out of the choir. Turning his back to them, he appeared to be closely studying the carving upon the screen, and fortune seemed to favour him, for, to escape the rest of the congregation as they filed down the steps, Mistress Denham moved further aside, so that he was well within earshot of the little group.

"Lady Temple," he heard her say, "I want to present to you my friend, Mistress Audrey Radcliffe. We wondered whether it would be convenient to you some day to have a talk with her."

"By all means, my dear," said a sweet, clear voice. "Indeed, the less time we lose the better, for it is important that the Queen learns all as soon as possible."

Come to my house in Battersea to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock. It is the only free afternoon this week."

"Unfortunately, I have promised to drive with my aunt to Enfield Chase," said Mary Denham. "Yet it is important that no time be lost."

"Yes," said Lady Temple, "especially as I shall wait upon her Majesty on Tuesday. How would it be if Mistress Radcliffe came to my house in a chair? Then we could have a quiet talk together, and she could be back in Norfolk Street by the time you return from Enfield."

"Should you mind that?" said Mary. "You have probably never seen a sedan chair, but they are really very comfortable and will take you without any trouble, on your part, from house to house."

"I should like to go in one," said Audrey, who always enjoyed a novel experience.

So it was arranged that she should pay the visit, as Lady Temple suggested, and the three ladies walked down the nave together to the west door, leaving Henry Brownrigg to saunter slowly down the north aisle, cudgelling his brains as to the best way to defeat these womenfolk who were doing their best to free his rival.

CHAPTER XVII.

“What, all conspiring in one tale!
Or fooled by one deceit!
Yet think not ye shall so prevail,
Or me so lightly cheat.”

TRENCH.

“I TOLD Michael that the thought of all the plotting and scheming that had gone on in the past terrified me,” said Audrey, the next day, as she sat in Mary Denham’s room, while her friend dressed for the expedition to Enfield Chase. “But now it seems to me that we are at an end of all the bad schemes, and everyone is only planning how to help us. How good it is of you and Lady Temple to take all this trouble for us!”

“I am sure,” said Mary brightly, “that it is to Lady Temple, as it has been to me, nothing but a pleasure. I am glad, too, that you will be alone with her to-day; you will find it more easy to tell her all about the past. And, indeed, she will enjoy having you. You know she has lost her children, and I think the sight of you will be a great refreshment to her. At Moor Park she has the company of her widowed daughter-in-law and of her grandchildren, but here she is sad and lonely I fear.”

Just then the maid came to announce that the coach was at the door, and Mary turned to give a farewell kiss to her guest.

"I must not keep my aunt waiting," she said. "Thomas will see you safely into the chair, and will direct the men to Lady Temple's house, and I daresay by the time you come back we shall have returned too. Good-bye, and good luck to you, dear."

She ran downstairs, while Audrey retired to her own room and finished a letter to her grandfather, telling him of her betrothal to Michael, describing their visit to the Tower, and telling him of the call she was about to pay. Then, at three o'clock, feeling very nervous at the prospect of her interview with Lady Temple, she went downstairs, and for the first time in her life got into a sedan chair. It had been carried into the hall, and the old butler was giving the chairmen directions as to the exact place in Battersea where the house stood. They said they knew it well, and Audrey for the time forgot her fears in the curious experience of having the lid put on to the box in which she was cooped, and in feeling the swaying movement of the chair as the bearers lifted it and trotted along the street. There was much to amuse her, moreover, in the crowded thoroughfares, which she could see through the windows as she was borne along, and to her country-bred eyes London seemed a most enchanting place. It was not until she was car-

ried up the well-planted carriage drive which led to Sir William Temple's house at Battersea that she began to feel a little alarmed at the prospect of her interview, and her heart beat uncomfortably fast when the great doors were swung wide to allow her chairmen to enter and set down their burden in the entrance hall.

She ordered them to return in half an hour, and they left the chair and went off, while Audrey was conducted by the butler through a stately withdrawing-room into a smaller room beyond, where she found Lady Temple seated at a reading-stand, whereon lay a volume called the *Story of China* by Fernando Mendez Pinto. At her feet lay a huge mastiff, which rose with his mistress to receive the visitor, and sniffed at her with approval as she curtseyed low.

Lady Temple had the most charming manner, and speedily made her entirely at her ease. Her beautiful dark eyes grew soft and tender as the girl, little by little, told the whole story of her betrothal to Henry Brownrigg and of the manner in which he had jilted her. It was easy enough to understand the rough awakening through which she had passed, and the revelation which had come to her when she imagined that Michael had been killed.

"If, as seems likely," said Lady Temple, "Mr. Brownrigg is indeed in London and trying secretly to prejudice Mr. Michael Radcliffe's case, he will at any-

rate be unable to appear openly, or he might be arrested for causing the death of your uncle in the duel."

"Yes, that is all clear gain to us," said Audrey. "He dare not show himself openly. Yet, I fear Henry must still be doing his utmost to harm Michael, for otherwise people say he would never have been removed from Cockermouth, seeing how simple the case against him really is."

"You are ready to swear that he has no Jacobite leanings?" said Lady Temple.

"Yes, perfectly ready. Michael has ever been one of King William's admirers, and though they tried their utmost to make a Papist of him they failed."

"To be sure, I recollect Mary Denham told me something of that. Well, I hope to see her Majesty at Kensington to-morrow and will tell her your story. May I mention that you are now betrothed to Mr. Michael Radcliffe?"

"We were actually betrothed on Saturday," said Audrey, blushing rosy-red.

"So much the better," said Lady Temple, smiling. "Her Majesty is a true woman and loves a romance. I shall tell her your tale, and try to get an audience for you with the King."

"With his Majesty!" exclaimed Audrey, looking much alarmed at the prospect.

"That would be by far the best plan," said Lady

Temple. "And, my dear, you need fear nothing. Though brusque of manner, his Majesty is just and tolerant; moreover, he is quick at reading character, and I think you would do well, if possible, to plead your lover's cause yourself."

It was a formidable prospect for one so little versed in the ways of the world. Still, to be able to serve Michael was the keenest pleasure Audrey had known for many a day, and as she parted with her kindly hostess her spirits rose at the thought of the work before her.

"You think her Majesty will indeed give me audience?" she asked wistfully.

"I do not for a moment doubt it, my dear," said Lady Temple, touched by the anxious expression of the sweet young face. "The Queen has the kindest of hearts, and I have very little doubt that you will soon see Mr. Radcliffe set at liberty."

The words and the kind, motherly look which went with them sent Audrey away with a heart full of gratitude and hope. As once more she stepped into her chair and was borne down the drive it seemed to her that their troubles were at length almost at an end, and she could have sung for sheer happiness as her bearers trotted along through the roads and lanes between

Battersea and Southwark, for in those days London Bridge was the only bridge across the river.

All at once she was recalled from her pleasant imaginings by feeling that her men were slackening their pace. Looking out of the window, she saw that they were in a quiet lane and that the men were pausing before a lonely house standing in a walled garden.

To her amazement, their arrival seemed to be expected, for the door was flung open, and the men, taking no heed whatever of her rapping on the window and calling out that they were taking her to the wrong house, carried the chair right in and set it down in the lobby.

Then, indeed, she realised that, although a sedan chair may be a most comfortable conveyance, it has one serious drawback: when once you are shut into it you are absolutely at the mercy of other people, and can by no possibility get free without help. All the tales she had ever heard of wicked cities and of luckless ladies decoyed into dangerous places, came suddenly back to her memory. Her sole hope seemed to be with the chairmen, for she had heard Mistress Denham specially order old Thomas to see that steady men they had employed before were chosen.

"Take me out," she cried. "Carry me to Norfolk Street, and Sir William Denham will reward you."

And at that the bearers for an instant showed themselves at the window to shake their heads and reject the offer.

"Doan't be afraid, missus; you're safe enough," said one; and Audrey, to her horror, noticed for the first time that they were not the men who had brought her, though they were dressed in precisely the same clothes.

It was but for a moment that she saw them; then they tramped across the lobby, and Audrey heard the opening and closing of the front door; after that an ominous silence reigned in the house.

The horror of this was almost more than she could endure. Covering her face with her hands, she tried desperately to think what she could do. Quiet as the place was, she could scarcely imagine it to be empty, for who had opened the door to them in that mysterious fashion as they entered? Would it be possible for her to break the glass of the window and crawl through the aperture? She glanced round to see how this plan would work, starting violently as she perceived a woman's face looking in at her. Had it been a good face she would have welcomed it, but it was as hard as a stone, and she knew that she need expect no help from the owner of that thin-lipped mouth and those steely eyes, with their subtle, crafty expression. She was horribly frightened,

but some instinct made her conceal her fear. She rapped imperiously on the window.

"Let me out!" she said. "There is some mistake."

"I can't let you out, mistress, until you give me your word you'll go quietly upstairs. There is no one in the house, and you shall not come to any harm. I will explain everything to you upstairs."

Audrey was silent for a minute. It was clearly impossible that she should remain boxed up in the chair; on the other hand, she dreaded the idea of going further from the front door. Still the idea of an explanation tempted her, and at length she consented to go.

The woman removed the top of the chair and set her free; then grasping her by the arm, led her swiftly up the uncarpeted staircase. The house seemed to be, as she said, quite uninhabited, and the rooms they passed by had no furniture in them. But when, at length, Audrey was led into one of the back rooms at the top of the fourth flight of stairs, she found that a small truckle-bed had been prepared, together with a few of the bare necessities of life.

"Now explain things to me," she said breathlessly. "What do you mean by dragging me up here?"

"I am but obeying my orders, mistress," said the woman in a surly tone. "I'll bring you some supper anon. And belike you'll find the explanation yonder."

She pointed across the room to a small table on which lay a letter, and as Audrey hastily stepped forward and opened it her gaoler beat a retreat, locking and bolting the door on the outer side.

The letter bore neither address nor signature, but in spite of certain studied differences, Audrey was sure that the writing was Henry Brownrigg's. She breathed more freely. Little as she had reason to trust him, she knew that there were certain things she need never fear from him. And the terror that had overwhelmed her when she first realised that she had been kidnapped and was utterly alone and helpless in this great city, gave place to calmer thoughts as she read the following lines:—

“Have no fear; you are perfectly safe in this house and no one will molest you. But you must remain a prisoner for the present until certain other plans have been successfully carried out.”

Clearly Henry had learnt of her visit to the Tower and feared that his efforts to criminate Michael would be checkmated. He had even perhaps learnt that she was to see the King and Queen, and had determined at all costs to prevent the interview from taking place.

Her brain reeled as she read the words over again: “You must remain a prisoner for the present.”

How long did he intend to keep her shut up in this awful solitude? And would he succeed in these other

plans that he spoke of? They could only be plans to harm her lover, and the thought of her impotence to help made her almost desperate. She rushed to the door, trying in vain to make the lock yield; she went back to the window, but escape from that seemed hopeless too, for it was high above the ground, and nothing was to be seen from it save a large ill-kept garden bounded by high red-brick walls and apparently given up chiefly to apple and pear-trees, while beyond a few tall elms effectually shut out any distant view. Whereabouts she was she had no idea except that she recollected that they must still be on the Battersea side of the river. To all intents and purposes, she might have been in the heart of the desert, for no cry for help, no signal to any other human being was possible. From actual danger it might be true that she was safe enough, but from the torture of loneliness and anxiety and utter helplessness there was no deliverance. Worn out with all she had endured, she threw herself on the bed in a passion of tears.

Michael, who would have been her natural deliverer, was himself fast in the Tower; Mary Denham and Lady Temple, with the kindest hearts in the world, could scarcely hope to trace out the conspiracy to which she had fallen a victim, for not only were they utterly in the dark as to Henry Brownrigg's whereabouts, but they did

not even know him by sight. It seemed to her, as she lay there sobbing her heart out, that he might baffle them all with the greatest ease, and satisfy to the full his greed of vengeance, his cruel longing to pain his rival.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Faith’s necessity in a fair day is never known aright.”

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

LADY DENHAM paid a longer visit to Enfield Chase than they had expected, so that it was already evening when they returned to Norfolk Street.

“Mistress Radcliffe has returned, I suppose?” said Mary to the old butler as she followed her aunt into the house.

“Nay, mistress, I have been wondering to myself that she be as late as this,” said Thomas, and he went out to gaze along the street for signs of the chair.

“’Tis strange,” said Mary. “Maybe, however, she is being kept to supper. I hope there has been no accident. Did she have steady chairmen?”

“Yes, mistress, the two her ladyship always employs—respectable men enough.”

Mary, looking somewhat anxious, began to climb the first flight of stairs, but paused at the sound of a thundering knock at the front door.

“She must have come!” she exclaimed, and hastened

down once more, to find, however, no chair as she had expected, but two breathless and shamefaced men, who were incoherently gasping out inquiries.

“The young lady—be she—come back?”

“No,” said Thomas. “What do you mean? Where is she?”

“We carried her to Sir William Temple’s house and left the chair there at four o’clock,” said the elder of the two men, mopping his red face. “She bade us come again in half an hour, and we went to get a drink at an alehouse hard by. There two fellows fell a-talking with us in a friendly way, and it’s my belief they was wizards, for, somehow or other, Ben and me we both dropped off asleep, and the next thing we knows was that the wizards had swopped coats and hats with us, and was clean gone.”

“Did the people at the inn notice naught?” asked Mary.

“Nay, mistress, we was in the parlour alone, and the wench at the bar she said she thought they was just two chairmen a-goin’ away when they left the alehouse some two hours before. So off sets me and Ben to find the chair, but when we got to Sir William Temple’s, why, they told us it had been gone these two hours with the young lady inside it, and the butler he told her ladyship, who bade us come back and tell you all as fast as we could.”

Mary had grown deadly pale; she instantly perceived that there must have been foul play somewhere, and the thought that she had perhaps only brought Audrey to London to expose her to greater dangers made her heart die within her.

"Sit down," she said, motioning the men to a bench. "I must tell Sir William Denham and see what can be done."

It seemed, alas! that there was very little to do. Rupert Denham and Mary went with the men to the nearest magistrate, and there made their deposition as to Audrey's strange disappearance. The constables and the watchmen were ordered to do their utmost to trace out the miscreants who had drugged the chairmen, and next day all London rang with the story of the abduction of Mistress Audrey Radcliffe.

It was, however, only too easy in those days for people to disappear. The wretchedly insufficient supply of watchmen, the slowness of communication, the stupidity of such constables as were specially employed to search for criminals, made many things possible in the seventeenth century which in modern times would be carried out with infinite difficulty, and almost certainly discovered before any length of time had elapsed. It was resolved that at all costs they must keep the news from Michael as long as possible, for, pent up in the Tower, Mary feared that such dreadful tidings would

make him desperate. Each day they hoped to find Audrey, and beyond writing to Michael to ask him to set down on paper a full description of the Under-Sheriff to aid the authorities in their search, Mary held no communication with him.

Her request seemed to him natural enough, and he wrote the description as desired, deeming that she did not wish to trouble Audrey with questions as to the man who had jilted her. He was actually writing the details of Henry Brownrigg's height and appearance when, to his surprise, young Enderby the Jacobite was shown into his cell.

"Mr. Radcliffe," he said, "I chanced to be admitted to-day to see my Lord Clarendon, and I have leave to visit you also. I wish to let you know how deeply I regret that words spoken by me to a stranger while dining at Pontack's early in August should have been twisted into evidence against you. You will remember that we met last June in Villiers Street."

"Yes," said Michael, "I recollect your coming in while I was calling on Mr. Calverley. I had then, of course, no notion that he was my father or that he was in communication with St. Germain's, and only gathered that last fact from the words you let fall."

"Believe me," said Enderby, "I repeated the story just as it happened to this scoundrel, thinking him a friendly fellow and not dreaming that he had a spite

against you. Then he goes to the authorities with a cock and bull story that you had known all about the lemon-letters, and had the impudence to say I told him it was the case. I suppose he is this villainous Under-Sheriff Brownrigg who is in hiding for having killed your father?"

"There is Mr. Brownrigg's description. I have just been writing it," said Michael, handing the paper to his visitor.

"Ay, he was a tall man, I remember, but he was wearing, if I recollect, an auburn peruke. The miscreant has now wholly disappeared, and God knows what he has done with your young kinswoman. It must be hard for you to be a prisoner and unable to help in the search for her."

Michael sprang to his feet; the blood rushed to his face.

"What do you mean?" he cried in a choked voice. "For God's sake tell me what has happened."

"Have they not told you?" exclaimed Enderby, greatly dismayed. "Why, Mistress Radcliffe was being carried back about five o'clock last Monday afternoon from my Lady Temple's house at Battersea in a chair, and it seems that the real chairmen were drugged while waiting for her, and some villains, probably in Mr. Brownrigg's pay 'tis thought, carried the chair off with the lady inside it and she has not yet been traced.

'Tis hard on you, locked up here, but—why, good Lord! my dear sir, I'm confoundedly sorry to have told you!"

For with the chattering voice of the Jacobite still pouring forth the words which wrung his heart, Michael suddenly reeled where he stood, and before his companion could steady him fell heavily to the ground in a swoon.

* * * * *

When Audrey woke on the Tuesday morning to find herself a prisoner in the empty house, her heart was heavy indeed. Yet, being young and vigorous, things did not look quite so hopeless to her as on the previous night. The darkness was over, no peril had come near her, and now the sun was shining. Moreover, she could hear on the stairs the voice of a child, and this cheered her more than any other sound could have done.

When the surly woman came later on with her breakfast, the little child strayed in after her, staring with all his eyes at the pretty lady who stood by the window. He must have been about five years old, and had a most friendly look in his blue eyes and chubby, round face.

Audrey held out her watch to entice him, and he was soon sitting on her knee, looking at the mysterious ticking clock, as he called it, contained in the little shagreen outer case.

"Let him stay with me while I breakfast," she said, glancing at the woman.

"Oh, if you like to be troubled with him," replied her gaoler with a shrug of the shoulders. But there was nevertheless a slight softening in her hard face as she glanced at the two. The child was very dear to her; he was also much in her way during the morning, so that she caught at once at a suggestion which meant pleasure for him and relief to herself.

It came about therefore that the long hours, which would otherwise have been intolerable to Audrey, were cheered by the presence of flaxen-haired Tim, who fell into the habit of coming in every day with her breakfast and again with her supper, and amused her not a little by his childish prattle.

When he was not with her she racked her brain to think of means of escaping from her prison-house. But it was not until the Thursday morning that an idea suddenly occurred to her. Then, as she sat musing sadly over the terrible trouble which she knew her absence must be causing to Mary Denham and to Michael, something all at once reminded her of her visit to Carleton Manor and of the story of Lucy Carleton's leap from the window into the tree when she made her escape from home.

Alas! the only tree near this house grew far below her window, and by no possibility could she hope to

reach it. But as she gazed sadly down into the tree so far below her she heard Tim's cheery little voice singing in the garden:—

Cuckoo, cherry tree,
Catch a bird and give it me.
Let the tree be high or low,
Let it hail or rain or snow.

Leaning out of the casement, she saw that he was skipping, and with the monotonous beat of the rope on the path, and the sound of the child's little feet, a thought suddenly darted into her mind. If she could only induce Tim to leave his skipping rope with her when he next came to pay her a visit, surely she might with its help reach the window below, and escape through the empty room she had seen as she came upstairs on the day of her arrival, letting herself out of the front door noiselessly while the woman of the house slept.

Her heart beat so fast at the mere thought of escape that she had much difficulty in calming herself enough to think out the details of her plan. More than once she had thought of climbing down from the window, but its height from the ground had always baffled her. Moreover, the woman had taken care to leave her nothing which could serve to help so perilous a descent; the sheets were mere rags and tore with a touch, while the small rug which served as a coverlet was far too

thick and strong to be torn into lengths and used as a rope.

She knew that the woman was now in the adjoining room in the front of the house, where apparently she and little Tim slept. It would therefore be well to seize the opportunity of speaking to the child in the garden, and leaning far out of the casement, she managed to attract his attention.

"Are you coming up at supper time?" she said.

"Ay, mistress, I'm a-comin'," said Tim, kissing his fat little hand to this captive princess whom he had learnt to love.

"Then bring your skipping rope to show me," she said, "and if you'll put an apple in your pocket I will cut it into a well for you."

The child nodded and ran off to choose the best windfall he could find in the grass. Audrey was in terror lest he should forget the rope, and she hardly knew how to contain herself for joy when at seven o'clock he trotted in after his mother as she brought the supper-tray, with his skipping rope tucked under his arm and a ruddy apple in his hand.

"Now cut me the well," he pleaded. "I want to see how you make it into a well."

"Yes," said Audrey, "you shall see. But first you must help me to eat my supper." And the woman left

them, as usual locking the door, and reminding Tim that she should come for him in half an hour.

"Skip and show me how well you can do it while I spread you a piece of bread and butter," said Audrey.

And Tim obediently went through the performance, after which she gently took the rope from him and slipped it under her skirt while he was hungrily devouring the food she had prepared.

They chatted merrily throughout the meal, and she had just finished making his apple-well when his mother returned for the supper-tray."

"Look!" shouted Tim. "See what the lady's made me," and he was so much enchanted with the novelty of the hollow apple and the delightful little notches which fitted into each other so daintily that he forgot all about his skipping rope and went off to bed clasping his treasure, leaving Audrey a little sad at the thought that she had used him as her unconscious tool, and that if she succeeded in her escape she should never see the child again.

However, there was no time to be lost in regrets like these. She had to examine her rope carefully while the light lasted. Fortunately, it proved to be long and strong. Evidently it had been too long for little Tim, since in several places it had been knotted. And this reminded her that in the old days when Michael used to go after the eagles in Borrowdale, the rope by

which he had been lowered had always had strong knots tied in it, and that knots would be the only means of preventing her too rapid descent. Even as it was, she knew well enough that the task would be a difficult one and that she ran great risk. Still anything seemed better to her than to allow Michael to remain any longer in the agonising state of suspense she knew he must be in. Having carefully tested each knot, she hid the rope in case the woman should again enter the room, and then began to examine the window. It was a fairly large casement, and the lattices swung back close to the wall, where they could be secured by iron hooks on each side. In the centre was an upright stone mullion. She tested it as well as she could, and thought that if the rope were securely fastened round it she might safely venture the descent to the window-sill of the room below. She took the precaution of opening the lattices and fastening them back at once, but dared not do anything further until night had come.

The hours of waiting seemed to her endless, but at last, to her intense relief, she heard the woman toiling up the long flights of stairs and shutting herself into the adjoining room. Then, in a few minutes, silence reigned throughout the house. From time to time in the distance she could hear a church clock striking the hour, and not daring to let herself sleep, she sat waiting in an agony of impatience for the first tokens of dawn to

show themselves in the sky. The waiting seemed so fearfully long that she began almost to fancy her sight must be failing. However, just as the church clock struck three a slight change became perceptible in the outer world. The air seemed to grow colder; away in the distance she heard the crowing of a cock, and a glimmering of light began to show itself in the sky.

Stealing gently to the window, she made her rope fast about the mullion, and with intense anxiety let it down.

The moment had come, and she scarcely knew whether delight that her waiting-time was over, or desperate anxiety as to the perilous descent, or the sheer terror of pursuit filled the largest place in her heart.

She swung herself noiselessly up to the window-sill, clinging with one hand to the mullion, and trying not to let her brain grow unsteady as she glanced down that giddy height. It was bad enough to sit there on the sill with her feet hanging in mid-air. What would it be when she was actually sliding down with nothing but a child's skipping rope to cling to?

"Well, the longer I look at it the less I shall like it," she said to herself, drawing a deep breath. "Now! for the sake of freedom and Michael!"

And with that she bravely gripped the rope, and the next moment felt herself swaying out horribly into the dim space. The rope tore through her hands; she slid down, down, scraping against the wall of the house, till

at length something touched her feet, and clutching desperately at the mullion of a window, she found herself standing in safety on the broad window-sill of the room beneath, but so terribly giddy and shaken that for some moments she could only pant for breath, and cling with all her might to the friendly shelter of the window-frame.

At length a little recovered, she bethought her of the next step in her escape. She had hoped to find the window open, or at anyrate to be able to loosen the fastening from the outside. But, to her dismay, this proved to be impossible. She dared not make a noise, lest her gaoler should be roused and all her efforts to unfasten the casement proved unavailing.

"I must do as Michael's mother did and jump into the tree," she reflected. "From this lower window it may be just possible—nay, it *shall* be possible."

The words of the child's song floated through her mind, and with the courage born of love she forced herself to face round upon the window-sill, to stand upright, then to bend for that desperate jump which would mean safety or death.

"I must see the King and Queen and tell them the truth," she reflected, "or Michael may be ruined."

And as she sprang towards the cherry-tree she seemed to hear Tim's voice gaily singing:—

Let the tree be high or low,
Let it hail or rain or snow.

There was a crash as of a broken branch; then the next thing she knew was that she was clinging to a rugged and moss-grown old trunk, that her hair had caught in the branches above her, and that blood was trickling slowly down her hands and arms. To disengage herself and climb down from the tree was no difficult task to a country-bred girl. With a feeling of rapture she found herself safely on the wet grass, and began hurriedly to walk down to the place where from her window she had seen the row of elm trees. Alas! to her dismay she found that the high wall bound the garden in this direction also, and that it must be scaled before she was really free. Moreover, it was a red-brick wall, not like the loose stone walls used in Borrowdale to fence the fields. She was an adept at climbing those, but to get over this much higher and more difficult one would tax all her powers. Luckily, in one corner she came upon an apple tree planted against it. And, to her delight, the thick, strong branches closely nailed up against the bricks proved almost as good as a ladder. Audrey climbed up to the top valiantly, then looked anxiously to see how she would fare on the other side. Beneath her there was a dusty road. Away in the distance she could see the chimneys of houses or cottages, and immediately opposite her was another

red-brick wall, evidently bounding some other garden. There was no help for it; she must let herself down as well as she could and trust to reach the road without broken bones. Swinging herself over, she hung by her hands for a moment, then dropped, rolled over twice, struck her head against a stone in the road and lay there in the dust stunned.

She was roused in a few minutes by the heavy rumbling of wheels, but was still so dazed by her fall that she could not make up her mind to stir. Then the wheels stopped and footsteps drew near, at which she started up in sudden alarm. In the road she saw a market waggon laden with apples, and beside her, looking greatly perplexed, was a countryman in a smock frock and broad felt hat.

"Art hurt, mistress?" he said, glancing at her bleeding hands and torn dress.

"Yes," she said faintly. "I have been carried off by two ruffians and have only escaped with great difficulty. Pray take me in your cart as far as Norfolk Street, and my friends will reward you."

"Why, I'm but a waggoner, mistress, on my way to Covent Garden market; 'tis scarce a fit way for a lady like yourself to travel," he said hesitatingly.

"Oh, it will do excellent well," she said. "Only let me take shelter in it at once, for I am in terror lest they follow me."

"Never fear, mistress; I'll settle the man that tries to lay hands on ye," said the sturdy countryman. And with that he helped her into the waggon and covered her with a great bit of sacking; then touching up his horses, drove on towards London, promising to set her down in Norfolk Street before he went to the market.

The waggon jolted and rumbled on over the rough roads, but Audrey thought it was the most blissful ride she had ever known, and she could have kissed the old driver when at length he lifted her down at the door of Sir William Denham's house. His loud knock at the door speedily brought—not the old serving-man, but Mistress Mary Denham herself to open it.

"Oh, my dear! my dear!" she cried, taking the girl in her arms. "How thankful I am to see you safely back! We have been distracted about you. Are you indeed unharmed?"

"Quite," said Audrey, clinging to her. "And pray give this good countryman the reward he deserves, for without his help I should never have got here."

"Ma'am," said the old waggoner, "I found her a-lying in the road as white as a broken lily, and right glad I am I chanced to be passing along to market. She must have climbed over the wall of the house that used to belong to old Squire Mallinder. It's been empty this year and more—Millbeck House, you know, ma'am,

where the poor old gentleman was killed by his gardener."

"To be sure, I remember hearing of it," said Mary, and again warmly thanking the man for his help, she turned once more to Audrey as though loth to take her eyes off her now that at length she had come back to them.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Much dearer be the things which come through hard distresse."
SPENSER.

"You are sure no harm has befallen you?" she said anxiously, leading the girl to her room.

"None," said Audrey, "but I have had a terrible fright."

"And you have hurt your hands and arms," said Mary. "You must let me bind them up for you."

"What I chiefly need is hot water for washing and fresh linen," said Audrey, laughing. "I have been shut up in one room ever since Monday. Oh, you don't know what bliss it is to be free once more and to have you to talk to!"

Before long she was cosily ensconced in an arm-chair in Mary's bedroom, telling her all that had happened, and every detail of the escape, while Mary heated her a cup of chocolate over a little spirit-lamp, and listened very eagerly to her tale.

"And how about Michael?" she said when all was told. "I fear he has been sadly troubled about it."

"He has, indeed," said Mary, "but we contrived to

keep it from him till yesterday. Then, to my dismay, who should call upon me but young Mr. Enderby, the Jacobite, reproaching himself terribly for having, while visiting Michael, let out the fact of your disappearance. He is a chatterbox and can never hold his tongue. I went at once to the Tower and found him in terrible distress; but don't cry over it, dear heart, for is not his trouble happily ended? You shall see him yourself as soon as we can decently visit him."

"And you'll not expect me ever again to get into a sedan chair?" said Audrey, laughing through her tears. "I shall never forget the dreadful, helpless feeling of it."

"You shall have the family coach," said Mary, caressing her. "And we will first visit the Tower, and then go to see Lady Temple, for she has been sadly anxious about you. Indeed, dear, all London has been thinking of you, and her Majesty has herself more than once inquired whether there was no news yet as to your whereabouts."

"I told you," said Audrey, "that though the writing was in some ways unlike Henry Brownrigg's on this scrap of paper, yet in one or two points it much resembles his; and what the old waggoner said as to the house confirms my thought that he planned it all. Millbeck is the name of the Brownrigg property near Keswick, and I know he has kinsfolk of the name of Mallinder. Doubtless he knew this house to be empty

and deserted, and was easily able to use it for a prison for me."

"Well, do not let us talk any more just now," said Mary, "but try if you cannot rest for awhile in my bed while I go down and tell my uncle the good news. See, I will draw the curtains, and after this long night of excitement and adventure you will surely sleep."

Audrey protested, but nevertheless was soon sleeping soundly, nor did she stir till Mary came to her room at ten o'clock.

Waking then to find the gentle face and thoughtful brown eyes of her friend looking down on her, she suddenly wreathed her arms about Mary Denham's neck, kissing her with an almost passionate devotion.

"Oh, how good it is to wake and find you near me instead of waking in that dreadful room to the sight of that hard-looking hag! Had it not been for little Tim I think I should have lost my wits altogether."

"Poor child, you must indeed have had a terrible time," said Mary. "Are you really fit to come now to the Tower? If so, the coach is at the door and we had better dress."

Audrey protested that she was fit for anything after the sleep she had had, and indeed excitement had brought a lovely glow of colour to her cheeks and had made her great grey eyes brighter than ever.

Mary, glancing at her as they were taken to Michael's

cell, thought she had never seen a lovelier face, and in truth there was a new beauty about it, for those anxious days had developed Audrey, bringing out all that was strong and noble in her character. It was arranged that she should linger a little behind on the stairs while Mary went to give Michael a word of preparation.

He started up eagerly as the door was opened, and she was grieved to see how wretched and haggard he looked, evidently having been unable to sleep since Enderby had brought him the bad news.

"Have you heard anything of her?" he asked, scarcely pausing to greet his visitor in his extreme anxiety.

"Yes, we have," she said with a smile. "All is well, and you must brace yourself up to learn good news this time."

"Tell me quickly," he pleaded. "You are sure it is true, and that she is indeed unharmed?"

"Quite sure. She will tell you all herself, she is here now, and only longing to see you."

With that she summoned Audrey, hardly able to resist a smile when she saw that this couple, who had been betrothed but a week, were very much more like husband and wife than any lovers she had yet come across. Where were the stately forms and ceremonies habitual in those days? Where were the deferential

modes of address? Clearly "Mic" and Audrey had belonged to each other in truth ever since their childhood in Borrowdale. The ill-omened betrothal to Henry Brownrigg, now happily at an end, had been but a brief, miserable interlude, and the Jacobite plot, which had accomplished nothing else but trouble and vexation, might at least claim to have had its share in preventing what must have been a most unsuitable marriage.

"Shall you think me very hard-hearted if I carry Audrey off now to see Lady Temple?" said Mary when Michael had heard the story of the last few days.

"Indeed," said Audrey, "it would be best for you, Mic, that we should lose no time. Mr. Brownrigg must by now have learnt of my escape, and we must not let him frustrate our plans any more."

"I will not say a word against your going if you will promise to run no further risks," said Michael. "You will be well on your guard now, and Mistress Denham will, I know, take every care of you."

"I don't think I shall dare to let her out of my sight," said Mary, laughing, "and I will undertake that she shall never go out save in the coach and with a lacquey in attendance."

They left the prisoner in excellent spirits, and crossing London Bridge with its quaint houses and shops, drove to Battersea to visit Lady Temple.

They found her just on the point of starting for

Hampton Court, and her motherly reception of them and the intensity of her relief on finding that Audrey was safe and unhurt touched them both.

"There is no time to be lost," she said in her sweet yet decided way. "You must both come with me now in my coach and we will, if possible, let the Queen hear Mistress Radcliffe's tale from her own lips before the gossips have had time to take the flavour out of it."

Mary reflected that they were scarcely in court attire, but she held her peace, knowing that Lady Temple had special privileges owing to her long friendship with the Queen; and, after all, though her own dress was of the quietest and Audrey's betrayed tokens of its country origin, they were going on a matter of great urgency, and not to any court function.

"The Queen, moreover, is a true woman, and will be more interested in Audrey's bonny face and curious romance than in her garments," she thought to herself, glancing to the other side of the coach, where Michael's *fiancée* sat lost in a happy dream of how she was about to rescue him from the grim old Tower where he had passed through so much.

It was about one o'clock when they reached the stately palace of Hampton Court. Lady Temple pointed out to them the turreted portion of the building, from the flagstaff of which the standard of England floated to show that the King and Queen were in residence.

"That is the banqueting room," she said, "and until the State apartments Sir Christopher Wren is building are finished it is the part of the palace chiefly in use. Her Majesty's rooms are in what they call the Water gallery, and the banqueting room communicates with the royal apartments by an underground passage."

Lady Temple was expected, and telling her two companions to follow her, they were all ushered through the corridors and anterooms of the somewhat stiffly arranged palace to a chamber opening upon the garden, where they were received by Lady Derby, the Mistress of the Robes, and an old friend of Lady Temple's.

"I have ventured to bring with me the young north country lady that all London is talking of," said Lady Temple, presenting Audrey to the Countess. "She hath most happily ended our anxieties by contriving a very brave escape from the place where she had been carried by the false chairmen. I am anxious that her Majesty should learn the tale, if possible, from her own lips."

"Her Majesty is in the garden with the King. She bade me bring you there as soon as you arrived," said Lady Derby, glancing with interest at Audrey. "You shall yourself propose to present Mistress Radcliffe, and meantime she and Mistress Denham will perhaps wait here while we learn the Queen's pleasure."

"That will be an excellent plan," said Lady Temple. "There is, moreover, a petition from Mr. Michael Rad-

cliffe, which we thought of asking her Majesty to lay before the King."

The two ladies went into the garden, talking together, leaving Mary Denham and Audrey in some trepidation at the notion of perhaps seeing the King himself.

"I could wish you were not in black," said Mary, "for 'tis well known that his Majesty cannot endure mourning garments."

"That is unlucky," said Audrey, "but who could have thought when we started this morning that we should be at Hampton Court in the afternoon! I am in black from head to foot, save for the red roses you gave me."

"Ah, to be sure! our roses for the prisoner in the Tower; that is a happy thought," said Mary, unpinning the ones she wore. "I will fasten these in your hat, and you must wear this white lace kerchief of mine, that will lighten the costume a good deal. Now, did ever two poor ladies come to court so ill prepared?"

Audrey protested against taking the lace and the flowers, but Mary was too intent on the need of conciliating the King and not offending his well-known taste to have a thought to spare for her own dress.

"There!" she said triumphantly, putting the last pin into the daintily arranged neckerchief. "If his Majesty is not content with you now he will be hard to please.

I only hope Mr. Radcliffe's petition is well written and easy to decipher."

"Oh, yes, Michael's handwriting was ever the clearest and best," said his *fiancée*. "I have no fears for that but much as to my own way of presenting it."

Before long Lady Derby returned and bade them come into the garden, as the Queen was anxious to see the heroine of so strange an adventure, at which saying Audrey could have found it in her heart to laugh, for it suddenly struck her that few girls had enjoyed the privilege of swinging from a rope and leaping into a tree in the early hours of the morning and being presented to a Queen in the afternoon.

"I am indeed something of a novelty," she thought to herself with a little smile playing about her lips. And then, as they crossed the smooth-shaven lawn, once Wolsey's property, and which had been trodden by the Tudors and the Stuarts, and by Cromwell in the days of the Commonwealth, she suddenly perceived a little group of people standing near a fallen tree, the victim of that September gale which had tried Mistress Mary Denham so severely on her journey into Cumberland. It was an elm, but it had served its time and the wood had become old and decayed. In its place the gardeners were planting one of King William's favourite evergreens, and his Majesty was himself superintending the work,

keenly interested in what was indeed one of his happiest hobbies.

Audrey could hardly have seen him at a better moment. When in the previous November Michael had seen him at Whitehall, he had felt a shock of disappointment, for a state ball always bored the King to distraction, and he invariably became stiff, taciturn, and morose-looking.

This morning he was in excellent spirits, and there was a delightful simplicity in his whole manner and bearing, so that Audrey had to remind herself that this was indeed the hero of the Boyne, the soldier King, who was never so happy as in the thickest of the battle.

The Queen, who had been in close converse with him and with Lady Temple, received the two younger ladies very graciously, and Audrey was thinking so much of her betrothed in his dreary cell that she had no time to remember that this interview was in truth a great ordeal. She looked into the kindly eyes of the Queen and at the King's thoughtful but inscrutable face, and answered the questions they put to her like a child repeating the catechism, her big grey eyes a trifle wider open than usual, her head raised and a little thrown back, for the King and Queen were standing on rising ground.

"If only Audrey had on a pinafore she might very well stand for the picture of a child at school," reflected

Mary, amused and surprised by the girl's unconscious mien. "Anything more innocently unabashed I never saw in all my life."

Meanwhile the King and Queen had asked all about the events at Borrowdale, and had heard of the manner in which John Radcliffe had been killed, and of how Mr. Brownrigg had fled, as it was thought, to London; and having previously learned from Lady Temple of the rivalry between the Under-Sheriff and Michael Radcliffe, they were able to draw their own conclusions.

"Does Mr. Radcliffe swear that he knows nothing of the Jacobite conspiracy?" said the King, scanning the girl's face keenly and satisfied with its perfect truthfulness of expression.

"He swears, sire, that he knew naught, though he had heard the rumours current in London during the trial of Mr. Crone. He also, during his last interview in London with Mr. Calverley, chanced to see Mr. Enderby and could not help inferring that he was communicating with St. Germain's, after which he avoided Mr. Calverley's society, nor once met him again until the night in Borrowdale when, under his true name of John Radcliffe, he met him in the cave above Lowdore."

"Were you always present during the interviews he had with Mr. John Radcliffe?" asked the Queen, "and can you recall any names that were mentioned betwixt them?"

"I was present each time, your Majesty, save at that

last meeting when they changed clothes on the night my uncle was killed," said Audrey. "And as to names, I am sure that none were mentioned. We spoke merely of the way in which my uncle could escape from the neighbourhood and take ship at Workington or Whitehaven."

"That tallies with what Mr. Michael Radcliffe said in answer to the questions put to him on his arrival at the Tower," said the Queen. "He swore he had never heard of Nevill Payne, nor of my Lord Annandale, nor Sir James Montgomery."

"Yet it is plainly proved that Mr. John Radcliffe was in their counsels," said the King thoughtfully. "Still, 'tis like enough he held his tongue while he was in Cumberland, where I gather he met with no encouragement even from the Catholics."

He again relapsed into silence, and once more glanced through Michael's petition, while Audrey waited in breathless anxiety, not daring to watch his face while he read, but looking in a vague way at the figures of some of the Queen's Dutch ladies as they paced to and fro under the shade of the fast-thinning elms and the chestnuts with their golden autumn foliage in what the English people had lately dubbed "Frow Walk".

"I' faith, 'tis an honest enough petition," exclaimed the King at length. "It seems to me that Mr. Michael Radcliffe hath had hard usage; nor am I inclined to

blame him for the part he played in trying to get his father out of the kingdom. Methinks love of a lady had more to do with it than politics."

The Queen laughed merrily, finding in this north country love-tale a curious relief, for she had been sorely burdened during the King's absence with the difficult task of unravelling the plot concocted by Lord Annandale and his accomplices.

"Then, sire," she said, "it were surely the best plan to hand over the prisoner to a more gentle gaoler than my Lord Lucas. If, as it seems, love of a lady led Mr. Michael Radcliffe into this escapade and has kept him nigh upon three months in durance, let the lady's love rescue him, for methinks she has played her part right bravely, and hath suffered not a little."

The King smiled one of those rare smiles which, illumining a sombre and harsh-featured face, seem like a sudden revelation of the divine in man.

He turned to his Gentleman-Usher, Sir Thomas Duppa, and bade him fetch writing materials; then, while the Queen once more questioned Audrey as to her escape that morning, he became engrossed in the tree-planting, forgetting for the time all affairs of state, or that such things as plots and prisoners existed.

Mary Denham had no fears now as to the result of the interview, and rejoiced in the thought that her daring suggestion of fetching Audrey from the north had

been justified. With a gleam of quiet humour in her eyes, she watched the extremely stately way in which Sir Thomas Duppa crossed the lawn carrying the King's pen, while behind him stepped a page bearing an inkhorn and some paper on a huge silver salver.

But the King's interest in the Cumberland romance had given place to interest in his tree-planting, and it was with a preoccupied air that he scrawled hastily on a sheet of paper the words "*Release Mr. Michael Radcliffe,*" and affixed his signature.

He bade the Queen also sign the document, saying with a smile that, after all, she was responsible both for the committal and the release; but Audrey doubted whether he even heard the grateful words with which she received the pardon. He turned abruptly away and began to talk to the gardeners, finally walking off with them to inspect the trees in the recently planted maze.

"Now, if Mr. Radcliffe be a wise man," said the Queen with a bright, arch look, "he will not let the grass grow under his feet, but will wed you with haste and carry you safely back to the north country, where sedan chairs, they tell me, are unknown. He is a lucky man to have won so brave a lady for his bride."

And with that kindly little speech ringing in her ears, Audrey, holding the precious letter for Lord Lucas safely clasped in her hand, curtsied low to the Queen and followed Lady Temple back to the coach, for it was

agreed that no time should be lost and that the order for Michael's release should be at once presented.

When they had left the precincts of Hampton Court and were rumbling slowly along towards the city, Audrey bent forward in the coach and threw her arms about Mary Denham's neck.

"'Tis your doing," she said, her eyes full of happy tears. "We shall owe the happiness of all our lives to you."

"Ay," said Lady Temple, smiling kindly upon them, "Mary hath ever had a quite unusual talent for the releasing of prisoners. You are by no means the first couple who owe her the happiness of their lives. And, my dear, let me give you a word of motherly counsel. Do not forget the Queen's injunction. Delays are dangerous. Have no scruple as to wedding your released prisoner as soon as may be, and get him safely away from London. For your grandfather's sake it were better to return with what speed you may, and the roads will be ill to travel over as the autumn goes on."

"Indeed," said Audrey, blushing, "if you think there is indeed nothing unseemly in such haste I would far rather that we were married at once, for I shall never be at rest about Michael till all is safely over."

And though no one mentioned Henry Brownrigg's name they all three thought of him, fearing greatly lest the man who had been foiled so many times should at the last succeed in getting the revenge he eagerly craved.

CHAPTER XX.

RECOLLECTIONS OF MICHAEL DERWENT.

“Yet Hope still beckons us, and beckoning smiles,
And to a brighter world her view extends.”

BOWLES.

WHEN I first entered the Tower of London, tired and heated with the long journey from the north and in the lowest spirits, I little dreamed that in that gloomy old fortress the greatest happiness of my life was to come to me. Yet so it proved, for it was there that I learnt through that best of friends, Mistress Mary Denham, that my hope was indeed realised, that the dismal doubt lest Sir Francis Salkeld's son should win Audrey's hand was for ever banished, and that I knew at last that my dear love cared for me and would accept my suit.

Yet even after that day of rapture when with her own lips she promised to be my wife, there were dark times of trouble for us.

Enderby, that chattering magpie, whose tongue seemed fated to work me mischief, nearly sent me off my head altogether by telling me without the least preparation the dire news of Audrey's mysterious disappearance, and had it not been for my love's brave determination to escape at all costs from the house to which that villain Brownrigg had caused her to be

carried, I don't think I could have borne up against the torture of having to wait helplessly in my narrow prison cell, not knowing in the least what was befalling her.

But when, on a fair September morning, she came with Mistress Denham to see me, and I found that she was unharmed and had baffled the Under-Sheriff, the sight of her speedily cured me; save that even now—when no danger threatens us—I have a foolish fear of letting her be away from me, as though the shadow of that past agony still lurked behind and kept me more or less its slave, and many a time I have been so far unmanned as to return in the middle of a day's hunting, unable to endure the torturing anxiety any longer.

However, this is anticipating, and I must set down, ere ending these recollections, the account of how, on that very day when Audrey had safely returned, my imprisonment was brought to a most happy end. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when my Lord Lucas, attended by some of the guard, came up the staircase of the Bloody Tower and, entering my room, with a civil greeting, handed me a paper. I thought it was to bid me to some sort of examination, since those in authority were most anxious to find out all that they could with regard to the Jacobite conspiracy, and on unfolding the sheet I could hardly believe that I read aright, for it was nothing less than the order for my

release procured by Audrey at Hampton Court and bearing the signatures of the King and Queen.

"You leave us under happier circumstances than most inmates of this room have done," said Lord Lucas with a smile. "'Twas from here that Colonel Sidney went to the scaffold; while for you, sir, my Lady Temple's coach waits, and within it the fair lady from the north country whose story has made so much talk in the town. Egad! sir, you are a very lucky man, and I swear that I'm half inclined to envy you."

He took leave of me very kindly. One of the warders carried down my possessions, and in a few minutes I stepped forth through the grim old gateways which I had entered with such dark forebodings, and was speedily being driven through the city streets.

Lady Temple plied me with questions, and Mistress Denham, with her kind brown eyes, watched our happiness with an air of great content, while Audrey, with her hand clasped fast in mine, leant back in her corner of the coach, somewhat pale with the excitement and fatigue of the day, yet with the look of a happy child in her face. It seemed to me that our journey through life together began in that very hour, nor did I find it difficult to persuade her to let our marriage take place as soon as the arrangements could possibly be made. She answered frankly that everyone from the Queen downward advised it, and that she was perfectly willing,

if it could be managed that the ceremony should as far as possible be a quiet one, with none of the usual merry-making and publicity.

And so it came to pass that by the time we had reached Norfolk Street all was settled, and Lady Temple had promised to be present at the church. I could have smiled to think how strangely this arrival at Sir William Denham's contrasted with my arrival in the previous autumn with Sir Wilfrid Lawson. In truth, I had been a most moody and miserable fellow on that night when, in company with Mr. Ambrose Newfold the chaplain, I had waited, hungry and sore-hearted, in the little cheerless room at the back of the house. Now, with Audrey beside me, and the talk running upon the arrangements for our wedding, how different a place the world seemed to me! Yet the house was absolutely unchanged: there was old Thomas, the butler, with his familiar face, as shrewd and discriminating as ever, and there was Lady Denham with her kind greeting; while Sir William sat reading *Willoughby on Birds* as though he had never moved since the last time I saw him.

They, one and all, gave me the most cordial of welcomes, and when later in the evening Hugo Wharncliffe and his wife came in to congratulate us, Mary persuaded him to sing the song that old Zinogle had taught him, and in his wonderfully sweet tenor voice he gave us a rendering of that quaint old ballad of *The Prickly Bush*,

which had rung in my head all through the time I had lain in the Tower

We were married one sunny October morning in the Church of St. Dunstan, Fleet Street, the very church where, twenty-three years before, my pretty mother had plighted her troth to John Radcliffe. As we passed out again into the street a strange thing happened. One of the horses belonging to the Denham coach began to rear and plunge, so that we were forced to stand for a minute before getting in. The sun was streaming down upon us in a flood of golden brightness, and it made Audrey's white dress and close-fitting, fur-bordered bodice glisten like snow on a bright, frosty day. She had her sunny brown hair dressed high in the way then fashionable, and had put on for the first time one of the white lace mantillas which London ladies wore in those days on their heads. Now, as we waited there while they strove to quiet the kicking horse, who should pass by but an aged, white-haired man in a suit of brown leather. It was none other than George Fox, the Quaker, and to my surprise and pleasure he at once recognised me.

"I have heard of thy imprisonment and thy many troubles," he said with that glance of the eyes which meant so much more than a conventional greeting. "And right glad am I, friend, to see that joy hath now been sent to thee. On this very spot long ago I saw thy mother. God grant thee a happier life; and forget

not this waiting on the threshold, my friends, ere going forth into the world. Just in this fashion should we each day learn to stand still in the Light ere going forth on our work."

And with that he went on, and we saw him no more. For not many months later the old man, after the briefest of illnesses, passed quietly away, to see face to face the Light he had so untiringly preached.

"Mic," said Audrey to me gently as we drove through Temple Bar, "he has just the same heavenly look in his face as Cousin Nathaniel Radcliffe. We will take that quaint saying of his, 'Stand still in the Light,' as our motto."

We had been married on a Saturday, and after a quiet Sunday in Norfolk Street, we bade farewell to those who had been so good to us in London, and set off early on Monday morning by the York coach, having extorted a promise from Mistress Mary Denham to visit us in the north some time in the following summer.

"Now, were it any other lady who had made that promise I should doubt its fulfilment," said Audrey, "but Mary seems a born traveller, and I verily believe is never so happy as when seeing 'Fresh fields and pastures new.' She will really come and see us at Goldrill House, and with her, as Lady Temple told me, it is 'Once a friend always a friend.'"

"What an extraordinary old gentleman!" I ex-

claimed, drawing her attention to a tall, bent old man in a grey periwig and an enormous grey cloak which was so arranged as completely to swathe his throat and mouth.

“I do trust he is not coming inside,” said Audrey. “He will take up so much room.”

And we both gave a sigh of relief when the old man climbed up beside the coachman.

There certainly was something strange about this gentleman's movements, and he afforded us much amusement. When the other travellers hastened from the coach to the inns at which we stopped on the road, eager to get warmed and fed, this old man of the cloak never put in an appearance. Whether he fed elsewhere we could not discover, but when we came out again there he was on the box-seat like Patience on a monument, and as he was extremely deaf and could only hear the driver's remarks when they were actually bawled into his ear, it was impossible to show him any civility, or even to pass a remark as to the weather or the discomforts of the journey. We called him the “Muffled Mystery,” for none of the passengers seemed to know anything about him, and when at length we reached York and repaired to the house of the Denhams' friends where Audrey had rested on her journey to the south, the “Muffled Mystery” had only just clambered down

from the coach-box, and was slowly counting out coin for the customary fees to the driver and the guard.

On Sunday we rested at York, then set out for the rest of the journey on horseback, Audrey riding her mare Firefly, which had been stabled at York all this time, and I contenting myself with hiring on the road, or, as they call it, riding post. We were fortunate enough to fall in at Ripon with my old schoolfellows, John Williamson and his brother, so that, with our grooms, we made a fair cavalcade, and ran less risk of being attacked by highwaymen. And of this I was thankful enough, for when we reached Richmond they told us some uncomfortable stories of travellers who had lately been robbed, and I could see that Audrey was somewhat nervous.

Perhaps on account of this we were all the more determined to keep up her spirits on the next day's journey, which chanced to be the worst of the road, betwixt Richmond and Appleby. At anyrate we were all extremely merry when, just as the light was beginning to fade a little in the afternoon, and we knew that we had not much further to travel before reaching the town, the sound of a pistol-shot startled us into sudden silence.

"There's mischief afoot," said John Williamson as a second shot was heard. "Let us press on at a good

pace; the sight of our cavalcade will drive off any highwaymen."

Audrey was the very first to respond to the suggestion; when danger actually came she was never afraid, and touching up Firefly, she pressed on eagerly, thinking that perhaps we might help some luckless and solitary traveller.

And, sure enough, directly we came in sight, a couple of villainous-looking highwaymen instantly made off at full speed, but their hapless victim lay face downwards on the strip of grass by the roadside, nor did he stir at our approach.

"Oh, Mic," cried Audrey, "it is the 'Muffled Mystery!' See, poor old gentleman! there is blood dyeing his grey peruke."

We hastily dismounted and bent over the wounded man. He moaned faintly as we raised him and turned his face to the light. The thieves had left his rifled pockets hanging inside out, and had torn off his watch. The end of his broad watch-ribbon fluttered in the fresh breeze as though to tell its story.

"Take off his peruke, and let us bathe his temples," said John Williamson; but as I obeyed there was a general exclamation of surprise and dismay, and looking more closely at the wounded man, I saw that the stranger who had passed for an infirm and bent old veteran was none other than Henry Brownrigg.

We instinctively knew that no good purpose could have brought him back to the north, but for the moment there was nothing to be done save to try to staunch the blood which was flowing fast from a wound near the shoulder. We succeeded at length, but feared that a more dangerous wound had been caused by the second shot which had entered the body lower down and must have caused some bad internal injury, for it was evident that the Under-Sheriff was dying.

"Ride on to Appleby," I said to the groom, "and see if you can bring with all speed a leech and a litter to carry him to the inn."

The fellow hastily mounted and rode off at a gallop, while Audrey, who had been fetching water in a little flask from a stream by the roadside, drew near, and bending down over the wounded man, began to bathe his face and to moisten his lips. For a moment, as I remembered how the Under-Sheriff had brutally insulted her, how he had jilted her at the time of her need, and had tortured her by the cruel trap he had set in London, I could hardly endure to see her touch him.

But death shames all selfish thoughts, and ere long I saw that she was only doing what any true woman would do for one in the last extremity.

The cold water revived the dying man for a time, and opening his eyes he looked at us in a furtive, shrinking way.

"Don't!" he gasped, as though the touch of her hands

burnt him. "I was here for revenge! I made sure of being able to pick a quarrel with your husband betwixt York and Penrith and of forcing him at length to fight. But everything thwarts me! The Williamsons spoiled all, and now these vile thieves——"

He broke off with a groan.

"They have sorely hurt you, I fear," said Audrey. "Yet they have saved you from being a murderer. Henry, have you no message for your mother?"

He did not reply, but lay with closed eyes as though thinking over her words. The savage hatred slowly died out of his face, and seeing how painfully he laboured for breath, I lifted him as gently as I could, which for the time seemed to ease him.

He opened his eyes again and looked at me in a perplexed way.

"What! is it you?" he murmured very faintly. "I wronged you. Let John Williamson tell my mother that I——" The words died away into a confused murmur, and his mind began to wander a little, for when next he spoke it was to call out passionately: "These robbers have thwarted me! I'm baulked again!"

Audrey, with tears streaming down her face, once more moistened his parched lips, and this seemed to bring him to himself.

"You are right," he murmured. "They have saved me from being a murderer."

John Williamson offered to take my place and support the dying man, but I feared to hurt him by moving, and indeed it seemed as if every struggling breath must be the last. We listened eagerly for the sound of horse-hoofs on the road, longing for the arrival of the leech. But all was still; only in the distance we could hear the lowing of cattle, and the cawing of the rooks as they swept by overhead on their homeward way.

There was nothing more to be done. Audrey knelt on the grass with her face hidden in her hands, and I knew that she prayed for the man who had given her such bitter pain. The rest of us just waited, watching intently the shadow that was creeping over the face of the Under-Sheriff.

At last I felt a convulsive struggle pass through the strong frame I supported. He half raised himself with a last effort.

“My God!” he gasped. “Forgive———!”

And with that his head fell back again on my shoulder. All was over.

When the leech came from Appleby there was naught for him to do, save to assure us that we could not possibly have saved Henry Brownrigg’s life. The second pistol-shot had placed him beyond human help, and it only remained for us now to carry the body to Appleby, and to give evidence before the magistrate there as to

the highwaymen who by this time had, of course, made good their escape.

The news was carried to Mrs. Brownrigg at Millbeck Hall by the Williamsons, and the Under-Sheriff's funeral took place at Crosthwaite five days later.

Audrey was so greatly upset, however, by all she had been through, that we were forced to spend the next month with the Aglionbys at Penrith that she might recover her health before travelling on to Derwentwater. I was not sorry to have the chance of resting there, for it enabled me to see something of my grandfather Carleton at Carleton Manor, and his interest in the clearing up of the mystery as to my birth brought a genuine gleam of pleasure into the sad life the poor old man had for so many years led.

Moreover, Penrith was within easy reach of our future home, and Sir Nicholas wrote to beg me to have all things put in order there, so that we could, after a brief stay with him at Lord's Island, settle down comfortably in a house of our own.

Audrey soon began to take keen interest in the arrangements, and, when great-aunt Aglionby would allow her to undertake the expedition, we rode from Penrith to Ulleswater, and there, the day being fine and the water journey likely to prove less tiring, took a boat and sailed to Patterdale.

It was the second anniversary of King William's land-

ing at Tor Bay, and much the same bright autumnal weather as it had been two years before when we had taken that ramble in Borrowdale and had found the miniature.

Mrs. Aglionby had insisted on our bringing a number of rugs and wraps, and with these I made a warm couch for Audrey in the boat, and leaving the man to manage the sail, we lounged luxuriously in the stern, my wife's head resting comfortably on my shoulder, for she was wearied with the ride from Penrith.

The wind, though fresh, was not cold, and I never saw anything more wild and beautiful than the wooded shore and the rugged mountains which rose majestically in front of us. At the far end lay Helvellyn and a peaked mountain which, the man told us, was called Catchedecam. The early gales had thinned the trees, but there were russet leaves still lingering on the oaks, and crimson touches on the maples, besides a wonderful blending of every shade of brown and gold on the hills near Howtown, where the green of the grass only showed here and there in patches, so thickly did the brake fern grow.

Just as we passed Gowbarrow Park the boatman called out: "Look yonder, sir, there are the red deer."

And glancing round, we saw one of the prettiest sights we had ever witnessed, for a herd of the beautiful creatures came down the grassy slope to drink, their branching antlers showing out finely against the blue of the water.

We seemed to be sailing quietly into a paradise of beauty, and Audrey's delight, as we passed close under Stybarrow Crag with its grey heights rising sheer up from the water, knew no bounds.

"To tell the truth, Mic," she said, "dearly as I love Derwentwater, 'tis a great comfort to feel we shall start afresh where there can be no sad memories. Do you think people feel like that when they reach the other world?"

"Perhaps they do," I said. "Anyhow, dear heart, here we will try, as George Fox bade us, to stand still in the Light."

The boatman set us down at the extreme end of Ulleswater in a somewhat marshy field, and a walk of about half a mile brought us to the Goldrill estate. The place had been untenanted, save by a farm bailiff and his sister, since the death of my father's second wife, and it was greatly out of repair. But already the carpenters were at work, and a cheerful sound of hammering and whistling reached us as we walked down the avenue to the old grey house.

For the first time I realised that I was the heir and that the place would indeed be my own; and for one who had eaten the bread of charity for twenty years and had thought himself lucky to earn an annual salary of twenty pounds since reaching manhood, the feeling was strange indeed. Was it all a dream? And should I

wake to find myself back in the pele tower at Isel Hall, once more Sir Wilfrid Lawson's private secretary?

I drew my wife's hand more closely within my arm, and looked down into her sweet face for comfort and assurance.

We had just passed the side of the house and were stepping on to the terrace walk near the front windows, when I saw her pale cheek flush with pleasure, all her youth and beauty returning in that glow of delight which thrilled through her as she saw the exquisite view which greeted us.

"Why, Mic!" she cried, "I feel like the Queen of Sheba! The half was not told me! You spoke of the winding stream and the green fields, but you never said that glorious mountain rose just before our very windows. I have lost my bearings. Can it be Helvellyn?"

"Indeed, no," I said, laughing. "Beautiful as it is, it rejoices in the unromantic name of Low Hartsop Dod!"

And at that she laughed right merrily, vowing that we ought to christen it afresh. "Though, after all," she added, "as I used to say to you in old days, Mic, why trouble about a name?"

"As I told you then, it makes all the difference sometimes betwixt honour and dishonour," I said, looking into her sweet grey eyes. "Would you have wedded me, do you think, had I been forced always to remain Michael Derwent, the Borrowdale foundling?"

"Mic," she said earnestly, "I would have loved you every bit as well and have wedded you, had I understood my own heart aright. But I was like a child at school that reckons amiss: all the sum worked out wrong and had to be sponged off the slate and begun once more. How happy a thing it is that one is allowed to start afresh! It hurts me to think that it has meant tears and grief and trouble to others besides myself, but perhaps 'tis the only way we can learn our lessons."

As she spoke she clung more closely to me.

I stooped to kiss her, and we stood there together in the sunlight watching the Goldrill Beck as it wound its peaceful way through the green pastures.

The robins sang in the mountain-ash trees, making me think of that dark day when I had waited at the foot of the Styhead Pass and had had the vision of my mother. And with the birds' blithe song there rose in me a confident hope that our lives, once so troubled, might pass serenely on—quietly serving the land like that winding stream—until they were merged in the wider life beyond, when

Long eternity shall greet our bliss
With an individual kiss;
And joy shall overtake us as a flood.

THE END.

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